

A TREASURY OF
MYSTIC TERMS



A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART III
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE &
PRACTICE



VOLUME 16

JOHN DAVIDSON

RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS

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EDITED AND LARGELY WRITTEN BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

A Treasury of Mystic Terms has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy, and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

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(KAVANOT–ZUÒWÀNG)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN THE COURSE OF COMPILING AND WRITING THE *TREASURY*, the editorial team have drawn on two major sources. Firstly, the scriptures and writings of mystics and others who have written on spiritual and mystical matters. Secondly, the works of scholars concerning these texts and their associated traditions. To all of these, we will be forever grateful. Among the mystics, we owe especial gratitude to the masters of Beas who have been, and who remain, the primary source of spiritual inspiration and perspective for most of the *Treasury*'s editorial team.

Sources of the many citations have been given in the references, endnotes, and bibliography. Among these are some that must receive special mention:

The translations of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translations of S. Radhakrishnan and Swami Tapasyananda.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from English translations endorsed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

For translations of the Buddhist Pali texts, we have made extensive use of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995); *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, tr. Maurice Walshe (1995); *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000); *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012); all published by Wisdom Publications of Somerville, Massachusetts; together with various

translations by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, published by Access to Insight (accesstoinsight.org and dhammatalks.org).

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá, and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux, and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC). The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá*, which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

Particular acknowledgement must be made of the extensive compilation of material made by Dr Javad Nurbakhsh in his 15-volume *Farhang-i Nurbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, translated by Terry Graham *et al.* (1984–2001) as *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*. Dr Nurbakhsh's considerable contribution to Sufi literature has been of great help to us in the compilation of the Sufi entries in the *Treasury*, and we have drawn upon his work, both in the Persian and its English translation. The numerous extracts are reprinted by permission of Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications.

Excerpts from *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, ed. & tr. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (Faber & Faber, London), copyright © by The Eling Trust (1979, 1981, 1984, 1995) are reprinted by permission of Metropolitan Kallistos and The Eling Trust.

Existing dictionaries and encyclopaedias are naturally of great assistance when preparing a work such as the *Treasury*. We gladly acknowledge the particular help we have received from *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, Georg Feuerstein (Paragon House, New York, 1990); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.* (Brill, Leiden, 1960–2005); *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni (Rosen, New York, 2002); *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Daito Shuppansha (Tokyo, 1965); *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms*, Hisao Inagaki (Nagata Bunshodo, Kyoto, 1984); *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, Damien Keown (Oxford University Press, 2003); *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, Ven. Nyanatiloka (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1988); *The*

Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, Robert Buswell & Donald Lopez (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2014); *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, ed. Ernest Klein (Carta Jerusalem, University of Haifa, 1987); *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Judaica Multimedia, Jerusalem, 1997); *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1901–6, jewishencyclopedia.com); *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Co., 1907–14); *Wikipedia* (wikipedia.org, 2001–); *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Mary Kawena Pukui & Samuel Elbert (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1986); *Te Aka: Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*, John Moorfield (maoridictionary.co.nz); *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Herbert Williams (nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WillDict.html); and *The A to Z of Jainism*, Kristi Wiley (Vision, New Delhi, 2006).

Thanks are also due to Dr John Smith, now retired from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University, for his Unicode character fonts.

The proposed twenty-three volumes of this work, of which sixteen have now been published, constitute a non-profit, educational, and scholarly project. The elucidation of terms and the numerous citations receive significant commentary, often bringing fresh insights regarding their meaning and relationship to other terms, with inter-faith comparison highlighted by the arrangement of entries under common subject headings. By these means we seek to contribute to spiritual understanding for global human benefit and the promotion of spiritual, religious, and cultural open-mindedness. We recognize that, in all probability, the authors of the original source texts wrote their works for the benefit of humanity, not for personal profit or acclaim. We have endeavoured to walk in their footsteps.

ABBREVIATIONS

General

Abbreviations that are a common part of written language are not included in this list.

C4th	fourth century (<i>e.g.</i>)
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confero</i> , compare (L. I compare)
<i>col.</i>	column
<i>fol.</i>	folio
<i>ff.</i>	and the following (pages, lines, <i>etc.</i>)
<i>lit.</i>	literally
n.	foot- or endnote(s)
<i>passim</i>	here and there throughout (L)
p.	page
pp.	pages
pron.	pronounced
ret.	retrieved web page, followed by the month and year of retrieval
►1 ►2 ►4	Indicates a yet-to-be-published entry in Parts I, II, or IV

Dates

<i>b.</i>	born
<i>c.</i>	circa, about
<i>d.</i>	died
<i>fl.</i>	flourished
<i>r.</i>	reigned or ruled
AH	<i>Anno Hegirae</i> , Muslim lunar calendar, from 622 CE, the Hegira (<i>al-Hijrah</i>), the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era, equivalent to BC.
CE	Common Era, equivalent to AD.
SH	Solar Hijri, the official solar calendar of Iran and Afghanistan, starting on the vernal equinox.

Languages

A	Arabic	C	Chinese	Gk	Greek
AC	Avá-Chiripá	Es	Spanish	H	Hindi
Am	Aramaic	Fr	French	He	Hebrew
Av	Avestan	G	Guaraní	Hw	Hawaian

J	Japanese	P	Persian	S	Sanskrit
L	Latin	Pa	Pali	Su	Sumerian
M	Marathi	Pk	Prakrit	T	Tibetan
Md	Mandaean	Pu	Punjabi	U	Urdu
Mo	Māori	Pv	Pahlavi		

Sources Cited

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī*, *Granthāvalī*, *Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

<i>Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār</i>	<i>Shabd Sār</i>
<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i>	<i>Bānī</i>
<i>Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd</i>	<i>Chune hue Shabd</i>
<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i>	<i>Granthāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak</i>	<i>Bījak</i>
<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i>	<i>Sākhī Sangrah</i>
<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i>	<i>Amīghūnt</i>
<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i>	<i>Kullīyāt</i>
<i>Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>	<i>Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>
<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i>	<i>Sindhu</i>
<i>Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī</i>	<i>Padāvalī</i>
<i>Ravidās Darshan</i>	<i>Darshan</i>
<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i>	<i>Vāṇī</i>
<i>Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā</i>	<i>Gāthā</i>
<i>Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī</i>	<i>Bārahmāsī</i>
<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>

Other books and texts cited are abbreviated as below. Full details are in the bibliography:

AA	“Apocrypha Anecdota II,” tr. M.R. James.
AGC	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Pritam Singh Chahil.
AGK	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Khalsa Consensus Translation</i> , tr. Dr Sant Singh Khalsa.
AKKS	<i>Ācārya Kundakunda’s Samayasāra</i> , tr. A. Chakravarti.
AKYS	<i>Awa Kenzō: ōi naru sha no michi no oshie</i> , Yasunosuke Sakurai.
ALSE	<i>As Long As Space Endures</i> , ed. Edward Arnold.
ALTS	<i>Amṛtacandrasūri’s Laghutattvasphoṭa</i> , Amṛtacandra, tr. P.S. Jaini.
AMBB	<i>Ānāpānasati</i> , Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, tr. Bhikkhu Nagasena.
AMBF	<i>Aḥādīs-i Mašnavī</i> , B. Furūzānfar.

ANER	<i>Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics</i> , tr. H. Rackham.
ANPT	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> , tr. Piyadassi Thera.
ANT	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , tr. M.R. James.
ANTB	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
AOCM	<i>The Arena</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Archimandrite Lazarus.
APAK	<i>Ashta Pahuda</i> , Acharya Kundkund, tr. Paras Das Jain Niyaytirthi.
APG1–4	<i>Agni Purāṇa</i> , 4 vols., tr. N. Gangadharan.
APJ1–2	<i>Ādi Purāṇa</i> , 2 vols., Āchārya Jinasena, tr. Pannalal Jain.
APOA	<i>The Art of Prayer</i> , I. Chariton, tr. E. Kadloubovsky & E.M. Palmer.
ASCH	<i>Āvaśyaka Sūtra with comm. of Haribhadra</i> .
ATTM	<i>Plenus Aruch</i> , 8 vols., Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome, ed. A. Kohut.
AZJW	<i>The A to Z of Jainism</i> , Kristi Wiley.
BAUS	<i>Buddha Abhidhamma: Ultimate Science</i> , Mehm Tin Mon.
BC	<i>The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot.
BDC	<i>The Book of Divine Consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno</i> , tr. M. Steegman.
BDH	<i>Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove</i> , tr. A.J. Wensinck.
BDTN	<i>Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings</i> , ed. John Reynolds.
BDVA	<i>Beholders of Divine Secrets</i> , Vita Daphna Arbel.
BES	<i>Black Elk Speaks</i> , John Neihardt.
BESW	<i>Black Elk</i> , Wallace Black Elk & William Lyon.
BGT	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , tr. Swāmī Tapasyānanda.
BL1–158	<i>Bodhi Leaves</i> (Magazine).
BL15	<i>Buddhist Meditation</i> , Francis Story.
BLTG	<i>Taoist Teachings: From the Book of Lieh Tzŭ</i> , tr. Lionel Giles.
BMP	“Bruchstücke manichäisch-parthischer Parabelsammlungen,” I. Colditz.
BNTW	<i>Buddhism in Nepal and Tibet</i> , ed. Paul Williams.
BTGG	<i>Blackfoot Lodge Tales</i> , George Bird Grinnell.
BTIT	<i>Buddhist Thought</i> , P. Williams with A. Tribe & A. Wynne.
CAGM	<i>Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind</i> , Yulia Ustinov.
CAPG	“Aristotle’s Psychology,” V. Caston.
CBSD	“Conversation between a <i>Starets</i> and a Disciple,” in <i>La Prière de Jésus</i> , tr. Émile Simonod.
CCED	<i>Cosmos and Community</i> , Livia Kohn.
CCKS	<i>Ch’an and Chih-kuan</i> , Paul L. Swanson.
CCME	<i>Commentaire sur la Paraphrase chrétienne du Manuel d’Épictète</i> , M. Spanneut.
CDBB	<i>The Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i> , 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
CDP	<i>The Collected Dialogues of Plato</i> , ed. E. Hamilton & H. Cairns.
CDSV	<i>The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English</i> , Geza Vermes.

CEI	<i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , Cyril Glassé.
CGT	<i>Càigēntán</i> , Hóng Zichéng (Yīngmíng).
CH	<i>The Clementine Homilies</i> , tr. Thomas Smith <i>et al.</i>
CMMS	“ <i>Cotidie meditari</i> ,” Robert Newman.
CMSS	<i>Concentration and Meditation</i> , Swami Sivananda.
CNEL	<i>Cultivating Body, Cultivating Self</i> , Michael Stanley-Baker.
COT	<i>The Compass of Truth</i> , Muhammad Dara Shikoh, tr. S.R. Vasu.
CPM	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean</i> , tr. E.S. Drower.
CR	<i>The Clementine Recognitions</i> , tr. Thomas Smith.
CSCM	<i>Cāritrasāra</i> , Cāmuṇḍarāya.
CSTM	<i>Cultivating Stillness</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
CTTP	<i>Cultivating the Tao</i> , tr. Fabrizio Pregadio.
CTW	<i>The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu</i> , tr. Burton Watson.
CU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. William Johnston.
CUCW	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Clifton Wolters.
CUEU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Evelyn Underhill.
CW	<i>Angelus Silesius: The Cherubic Wanderer</i> , tr. Maria Shrady.
CWJC1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
CWSV1–9	<i>Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 9 vols.
CWT1–3	<i>The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila</i> , 3 vols., tr. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez.
CWTA1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
DAA	<i>The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle</i> , tr. G. Phillips.
DAKU	<i>Dvādaśānuprekṣa</i> , Kārttikeya, ed. A.N. Upadye.
DDPP	<i>Dialectic and Dialogue</i> , F.J. Gonzalez.
DEGL	<i>Discourses of Epictetus</i> , tr. George Long.
DG1–2	<i>Dariyā Granthāvalī</i> , 2 vols., D.B. Shāstrī.
DHA	<i>Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī</i> , ed. Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.
DHJL	<i>Dīwān des Abū'l-Ḥasan Jehuda ha-Levi</i> , 4 vols., ed. H. Brody.
DHK	<i>Daoism Handbook</i> , ed. Livia Kohn.
DHWC	<i>The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ</i> , 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
DIH	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> , ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
DK1–3	<i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , 3 vols., H. Diels, ed. W. Kranz.
DL	<i>Divine Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DLTM	<i>The Dalai Lamas on Tantra</i> , Glenn H. Mullin.
DMZM	<i>Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation</i> , Carl Bielefeldt.
DOL	<i>The Dawn of Light</i> , Maharaj Sawan Singh.
DOSB	<i>The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism</i> , John Brown.
DP1–4	<i>The Dialogues of Plato</i> , 4 vols., tr. B. Jowett.
DPN	<i>The Dhammapada</i> , Narada Thera.

DPR	<i>The Dhammapada</i> , tr. S Radhakrishnan.
DRA	<i>Discourses of Rūmī</i> , tr. A.J. Arberry.
DS1–19	<i>Dàoshū shǐ'èr zhǒng</i> , 19 titles, Liú Yīmíng.
DSSK	<i>Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DTK	<i>The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction</i> , Louis Komjathy.
DTL	<i>Die to Live</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DZ1–1487	<i>Dàozàng</i> , refers to the <i>Zhèngtǒng dàoàng</i> , 1487 titles in 60 vols.
DZZ1–2	<i>Dōgen zenji zenshū</i> , 2 vols., ed. Ōkubo Dōshū.
EDSB	<i>Early Daoist Scriptures</i> , Stephen Bokenkamp.
EETC	<i>Encheiridion of Epictetus and its Three Christian Adaptations</i> , G. Boter.
EGPD	<i>Entrance to the Great Perfection</i> , Cortland Dahl.
EI1–12	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 12 vols., ed. H.A.R. Gibb <i>et al.</i>
EIL1–6	<i>Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature</i> , 6 vols., ed. A. Datta <i>et al.</i>
EIM	<i>Early Islamic Mysticism</i> , Michael Sells.
EKTG	<i>Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow</i> , Arthur Green.
EMAP	<i>Escala mística, y estímulo de amor divino</i> , Antonio Panes.
EREH	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , 13 vols., James Hastings.
ERWT	<i>The Epicurus Reader</i> , D.S. Hutchinson.
ET1–2	<i>The Encyclopedia of Taoism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Fabrizio Pregadio.
ETTT	<i>Esoteric Teachings of the Tibetan Tantra</i> , tr. C.C. Chi.
EVP	<i>Essays into Vietnamese Pasts</i> , ed. K.W. Taylor & J.K. Whitmore.
EVZK	<i>Entangling Vines</i> , tr. & ann. Thomas Yūhō Kirchner.
FCWM	<i>Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power</i> , Thomas Mails.
FGSM	<i>Crow Dog</i> , Leonard Crow Dog & Richards Erdoes.
FHMB	<i>Fundamentals of Hawaiian Mysticism</i> , Charlotte Berney.
FIAW	<i>Foundations of Internal Alchemy</i> , Wang Mu, tr. F. Pregadio.
FLML	<i>The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Richard Misyn, ed. Frances Comper.
FLRR	<i>The Fire of Love</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Clifton Wolters.
FMIA1–9	<i>Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah</i> , 9 vols., Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn.
FMPT	<i>The Fundamentals of Meditation Practice</i> , Ting Chen (Zhì Yǐ), tr. Dharma Master Lok To.
FSHM	<i>Pseudo-Macarius</i> , tr. George Maloney.
FYL	<i>Fǎngdào yǔlù</i> , ed. Lǐ Lèqíu.
FZBW	<i>The Future of Zen Buddhism in the West</i> , Roshi Robert Aitken.
GAP1–5	<i>The Greek Anthology</i> , 5 vols., W.R. Paton.
GCI	<i>A Gallery of Chinese Immortals</i> , tr. Lionel Giles.
GGES	<i>The Gateless Gate</i> , tr. Eiichi Shimomissé.
GGG	<i>From Glory to Glory</i> , tr. H. Musurillo.
GJKN	<i>Gommatsara Jiva-Kanda</i> , Shri Nemichandra Siddhanta Chakravarti, ed. J.L. Jaini.

GKTM	<i>The Gelug-Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra</i> , The Dalai Lama & Alexander Berzin.
GKYB	<i>Gorakhnāth and the Kānpḥaṭa Yogīs</i> , G.W. Briggs.
GLMT	<i>The Great Liberation</i> , tr. A. Avalon (John Woodroffe).
GLTS	<i>The Golden Letters</i> , tr. John Reynolds.
GPMO	<i>St Grégoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe</i> , J. Meyendorff.
GS	<i>The Gnostic Scriptures</i> , Bentley Layton.
GSR	<i>Gnosis on the Silk Road</i> , tr. H-J. Klimkeit.
GSV	<i>Gheranda Samhita</i> , tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
GTBG	<i>God Talks with Arjuna</i> , Paramhansa Yogananda.
HBCT	<i>The Heart of the Buddha</i> , Chögyam Trungpa.
HBSL	<i>Honen the Buddhist Saint</i> , Harper H. Coates & Ryugaku Ishizuka.
HCM1–2	<i>History of the Concept of Mind</i> , 2 vols., P.S. MacDonald.
HCW	<i>Hadewijch: The Complete Works</i> , tr. Columba Hart.
HDP1–9	<i>Handbooks for Daoist Practice</i> , 10 vols., tr. Louis Komjathy.
HDP3	<i>Yellow Thearch's Basic Questions</i> , tr. Louis Komjathy.
HDP8	<i>Redoubled Yang's Fifteen Discourses</i> , tr. Louis Komjathy.
HEDA	<i>The Hymns and Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian and the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage</i> , tr. J. Gwynn.
HEMI	<i>Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic</i> , Moshe Idel.
HGZE	<i>Hemdah Genuzah</i> , Zevi Edelmann.
HKUT	<i>Hikrei Kabbalah Ushluḥoteha</i> , Yeshayahu Tishbi.
HLT	<i>The History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler of Strasbourg</i> , tr. Susanna Winkworth.
HMBB	<i>The Handbook for Mankind</i> , Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.
HNMG	<i>A Hawaiian Nation I</i> , Michael Kioni Dudley.
HOBA	<i>Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba</i> , Abraham Abulafia.
HOCB	<i>Hoofprint of the Ox</i> , Master Sheng-yen with Dan Stevenson.
HSB	<i>Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari</i> , tr. Muhsin Khan.
HSDM	<i>The Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary</i> , Nancy Mayorga.
HSM	<i>Hadith Sahih Muslim</i> , tr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqui.
HSYB	<i>Haṭhapradīpikā of Svātmārāma</i> , ed. M.L. Gharote & P. Devnath.
HVP	<i>Commentary of Hierocles on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras</i> , A. Dacier, tr. N. Rowe.
HYKS	<i>Herigeru-kun to yumi</i> , Komachiya Sōzō.
HYPM	<i>Hatha Yoga Pradipika</i> , Swami Muktibodhananda & Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
HZZS	<i>How Zen Became Zen</i> , Morten Schlütter.
IC	<i>The Imitation of Christ</i> , Thomas à Kempis, tr. R. Whitford, ed. H. Gardiner.
ICMS	<i>Iamblichus</i> , ed. N. Festa, corr. U. Klein.
ICTK	<i>The Imitation of Christ</i> , Thomas à Kempis, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
IDL	<i>Introduction to the Devout Life</i> , St Francis de Sales, tr. M. Day.

- IEVP *Instrucción para enseñar la virtud a los pricipiantes*, D. Murillo.
- ILP *Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras*, Thomas Taylor.
- ILSE *Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. G.E. Ganss *et al.*
- ILT "Ignorance, Legend and Taijiquan," Stanley Henning.
- IMRR1–4 *Imam Gazzali's Ihyā' 'Ulūm-ud-Dīn*, 4 books, tr. Fazal ul-Karim.
- IP1–2 *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols., S. Radhakrishnan.
- IPWL *Iamblichus*, tr. J. Dillon & J. Hershbell.
- IUDG1–5 *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 5 vols., Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, ed. 'Allāmah Zīn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-'Irāqī.
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible*.
- JCL *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*; in *The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library*.
- JDH1 *Japan: A Documentary History*, vol. 1, David J. Lu.
- JE *Jewish Encyclopedia*.
- JH1–108 *Dàozàng jīnghuá*, 108 titles.
- JHL1–100 *Dàozàng jīnghuá lù*, 100 titles in 2 vols., comp. Dīng Fúbǎo.
- JMT *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*, Ben Zion Bokser.
- JPS1–2 *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, 2 vols.; Jewish Publication Society.
- JS1–2 *Jewish Spirituality*, 2 vols., ed. Arthur Green.
- JTPM *Jacopone da Todi, Poet and Mystic*, Evelyn Underhill.
- JY1–315 *Dàozàng jīyāo*, 315 titles in 10 vols., ed. Chén Dàlì *et al.*
- JYMS *Jaina Yoga*, R. Williams.
- KA1–10 *Kashf al-Asrār va-'Uddat al-Abrār*, 10 vols., Abū al-Faḍl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.
- KB *The Jerusalem Bible*, English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch.
- KBG *Kun byed rgyal po'i mdo*, vol. 94 of the Ulan Bator (Mongolia) copy of the *Them spangs ma* manuscript canon.
- KCN *Kahuna Class Notes*, David 'Daddy' Bray.
- KFF *Kitāb Fīhi mā Fīhi*, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ed. B. Furūzānfar.
- KG *Kabīr Granthāvalī*, ed. Shyām Sundardās.
- KGS *Kabbalah*, Gershom Scholem.
- KHI *Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī 'Irāqī*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī.
- KIFT1–4 *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, 4 vols., Muḥammad 'Alī ibn 'Alī al-Tahānawī, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Basaj.
- KJV *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*.
- KLTA *Kitāb al-Lumā' fī al-Taṣawwuf*, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Arabic).
- KM *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, al-Hujwīrī, tr. R.A. Nicholson.
- KMM *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Hujwīrī, ed. V.A. Zhukovsky.
- KNJI *Khuddaka Nikaya*, tr. John Ireland.
- KPSL *Ketem Paz*, Rabbi Simeon ibn Lavi.
- KSDS1–2 *Kullīyāt-i Shāh Dā'ī-i Shīrāzī*, 2 vols., ed. Maḥmūd Dabīr Siyāqī.

KSMF	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa'dī</i> , Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sa'dī, ed. M. Ali Foroughi.
KSS	<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i> ; Belvedere.
KSS1–4	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 4 vols.; Belvedere.
KSSS	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa'dī</i> , Shaykh Muṣliḥ Dīn Sa'dī Shīrazī.
KSUK	<i>Kalī Saṅtaraṇa Upaniṣad (Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda)</i> , tr. Anon.
KTAA	<i>Kulārṇava Tantra</i> , Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe).
KTJ	<i>Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt</i> , al-Jurjānī, ed. 'Ādil Anwar Khidr.
KTZB	<i>The Kōan</i> , ed. Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright.
KWGN	<i>Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name</i> , V.K. Sethi.
LATP1–2	<i>The Life of Apollonius of Tyana</i> , 2 vols., Philostratus, tr. F.C. Conybeare.
LDAC	<i>The Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> , John Klimakos, tr. Archimandrite Lazarus.
LDST	<i>The Last Days of Socrates</i> , tr. H. Tredennick, rev. H. Tarrant.
LDSV	<i>Lame Deer</i> , John (Fire) Lame Deer & Richard Erdoes.
LGFS	<i>The Love of God</i> , St Francis de Sales, tr. Vincent Kerns.
LMN1–15	<i>Likutey Moharan</i> , 15 vols., Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, tr. Moshe Mykoff, ann. Chaim Kramer.
LMTT	<i>The Life of Milarepa</i> , Lobsang P. Lhalungpa.
LOSM	<i>Light on Sant Mat</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
LPD	<i>A Letter of Private Direction and Other Treatises</i> , tr. J. Griffiths.
LPH	<i>The Ladder of Perfection</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
LSMH	“Lower (Second?) Section of the Manichaean Hymns,” tr. T. Chi.
LSN1–2	<i>The Lifestory of Naropa</i> , 2 parts, Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche.
LSRF	<i>Lettera scritta ad un religioso</i> , Giovanni Falconi de Bustamante.
MA	<i>The Master Answers</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
MARB	<i>Mashrab al-Arwāḥ</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī.
MBAK	<i>Meditation and the Bible</i> , Aryeh Kaplan.
MBB	<i>Ein Manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch</i> , W.B. Henning.
MBBB	<i>Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond</i> , Ajahn Brahm.
MBDP	<i>Mind Beyond Death</i> , Dzogchen Ponlop.
MBMR	<i>Mapping the Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> , Pabitrakumar Roy.
MBS	<i>Mīrābāī kī Shabdāvalī</i> ; Belvedere.
MDBB	<i>Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
MDLS	<i>Mira: The Divine Lover</i> , V.K. Sethi.
MIJS	<i>The Messianic Idea in Judaism</i> , Gershom Scholem.
MJAK	<i>Mīrābāī kā Jīvanvrat Evam Kavya</i> , ed. Kalyan Singh Shekhawat.
MJR1–8	<i>The Mathnawī of Jalālū'ddīn Rūmī</i> , 8 vols., tr. R.A. Nicholson.
MKAK	<i>Meditation and the Kabbalah</i> , Aryeh Kaplan.
ML	<i>Manichaean Literature</i> , J.P. Asmussen.
MM1–3	“Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan,” 3 vols., F.C. Andreas & W.B. Henning.

MMA	<i>Monk of Mount Athos</i> , Archimandrite Sophrony, tr. R. Edmonds.
MMAA	<i>The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus</i> , Marcus Aurelius Antonius, tr. George Long.
MMAH	<i>Megillat ha-Megillah</i> , Abraham bar Ḥiyya, ed. A. Posnanski, ann. & expl. Julius Guttman.
MMAS	<i>Maḥāsin al-Majālis</i> , Ibn al-ʿArif, tr. W. Elliot & A.K. Abdulla.
MMTD	<i>Magic and Mystery in Tibet</i> , Alexandra David-Neel.
MNNS	<i>Majjhima Nikaya</i> , tr. Nyanasatta Thera.
MPB	<i>A Manichaeian Psalm-Book</i> , Part II, tr. C.R.C. Allberry.
MPM	<i>Mittelpersische und parthische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer</i> , Werner Sundermann.
MPSM	<i>Mystical Philosophy of Sant Mat</i> , Peter Fripp.
MRM1–2	<i>Maori Religion and Mythology</i> , 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
MSAA	<i>Maṭṭeaḥ ha-Shemot</i> , Abraham Abulafia.
MSPP	<i>Mysticism: The Spiritual Path</i> , Lekh Raj Puri.
MSS	<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i> .
MTAR	<i>Makhzan-i Taṣawwuf</i> , Mawlvī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿurf ʿAllāmah Ḥayā Badāyūnī.
MTGS	<i>Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism</i> , Gershom Scholem.
MTIN	<i>Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh</i> , tr. A.J. Wensinck.
MTTL	<i>Mahānirvāna Tantra</i> , tr. Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe).
MWGD	<i>Mythology of the Wichita</i> , George Dorsey.
MZAA	“The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery,” Shōji Yamada.
NARB	<i>Native American Religion</i> , Nancy Bonvillain.
NBA1–26	<i>Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles</i> , 26 vols.
NDBB	<i>The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
NEA	<i>Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle</i> , tr. William Ross.
NHHL	<i>Nūḍān hébiān</i> , comp. & ed. Hè Lóngxiāng.
NHS11	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XI, ed. Douglas Parrott.
NHS20	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XX, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS21	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXI, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS22	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXII, ed. Harold Attridge.
NHS28	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXVIII, ed. Charles Hedrick.
NHS30	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXX, ed. Birger Pearson.
NKK1–2	<i>Nānā i ke Kumu</i> , 2 vols., M.K. Pukui, E.W. Haertig & C. Lee.
NKOM	<i>The Ninth Karmapa’s Ocean of Definitive Meaning</i> , Khenchen Thrangu, tr. Yeshe Gyamtso.
NRBB	<i>No Religion</i> , Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, tr. Bhikkhu Punno.
NRMK	<i>Noble Red Man</i> , comp. & ed. Harvey Arden.
NSBP	<i>Noble Strategy</i> , Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
NSCW	<i>Nil Sorsky</i> , tr. G.A. Maloney.
NST1–2	<i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> , 2 vols., Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, tr. Gyurme Dorje & M. Kapstein.

ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , Damien Keown.
OFLG1–14	<i>Obras del V.P.M. Fray Luis de Granada, de la Orden de Santo Domingo</i> , 14 vols., ed. Fray Justo Cuervo.
OGL1–13	<i>Oṣar ha-Geonim</i> , 13 vols., ed. Benjamin Lewin.
OHTU	<i>Opening the Hand of Thought</i> , Kosho Uchiyama, tr. & ed. Tom Wright, Jisho Warner & Shohaku Okumura.
OJF1–2	<i>Obras espirituales del V.P. Presentado Fr. Juan Falconi</i> , 2 vols., Fray Juan Falconi de Bustamante.
OJG	<i>Obras del P. Maestro F Gerónimo Gracián</i> , Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, ed. Andrés del Mármol.
OLP1–5	<i>Obras espirituales del V.P. Luis de la Puente</i> , 5 vols.
OPJ	<i>On the Prayer of Jesus</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Father Lazarus Moore (2006 edn.).
OPJA	<i>On the Prayer of Jesus</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Father Lazarus Moore (1965 edn.).
OSD	<i>The Odes of Solomon</i> , John Davidson.
OSDE	<i>Œuvres spirituelles</i> , Diadoche de Photicé, tr. Édouard des Places.
OSSS	<i>The Odes of Sheikh Muṣlihu-d-Dīn Sa’dī Shīrāzī</i> , Part I (<i>Ṭayyibāt</i>), ed. Lucas White King.
OTIT	<i>Original Tao</i> , Harold D. Roth.
OTP1–2	<i>The Old Testament Pseudoepigrapha</i> , 2 vols., ed. J.H. Charlesworth.
OWKG	“The Occupation of Wounded Knee,” D.C. Irvington.
PA1–7	<i>Plotinus</i> , 7 vols., tr. A.H. Armstrong.
PAS	<i>8 Chapters on Perfection & Angels’ Song</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Rosemary Dorward.
PBCK	<i>Acarya Kundakunda’s Pañcāstikāya-Sāra</i> , A.C. Nayanar.
PBD	<i>Buddhist Dictionary</i> , Ven. Nyanatiloka.
PCEE	<i>Proclus: A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid’s Elements</i> , tr. G. Morrow.
PCT1–5	<i>The Philokalia</i> , 4 vols., tr. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard & K. Ware.
PCW1–10	<i>Philo</i> , 10 vols., tr. F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker.
PDB	<i>The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , R. Buswell & D. Lopez.
PEA	<i>Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus</i> , tr. H.N. Fowler.
PEC	<i>Plotinus (The Enneads)</i> , tr. Stephen MacKenna.
PEHV	<i>Peri ‘Ez Hayyim</i> , Hayyim Vital.
PFMP	<i>On The Path To Freedom</i> , Sayadaw U Pandita, tr. Mya Thauang.
PG1–161	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Graeca</i> , 161 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne.
PGNM	<i>Plato on God as Nous</i> , Stephen Menn.
PHI	<i>Prayer and Holiness</i> , Dumitru Staniloae.
PIMT	<i>Pith Instructions on Mahamudra</i> , Tilopa, tr. Ken McLeod.
PMS1–5	<i>Philosophy of the Masters</i> , 5 vols., Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh.

PNPA	<i>The Practice which Leads to Nibbāna</i> , Pa Auk Sayadaw, comp. & tr. U Dhamminda.
PNW	<i>The Power of the Name</i> , Kallistos Ware.
PPBH	<i>Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History</i> , C.H. Kahn.
PPGA	<i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> , Brother Lawrence, tr. D. Attwater.
PPGL	<i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> , Joseph de Beaufort.
PPH	<i>Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision</i> , P. Hadot, tr. M. Chase.
PPL	<i>Plato: Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII</i> , tr. Walter Hamilton.
PPVM	<i>The Path of Purification</i> , Buddhaghosa, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.
PRCH	<i>Polynesian Religion</i> , E.S. Craighill Handy.
PRES	<i>The Psychology of Religion</i> , E.D. Starbuck.
PS	<i>Pistis Sophia</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot.
PSAS	<i>Purushartha-Siddhyupaya</i> , Shrimat Amrita Chandra Suri, tr. Ajit Prasada.
PSGG	<i>Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
PSGM	<i>The Phantastikos</i> , Shri Gurudev Mahendranath.
PSHC	<i>Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos</i> , Lawrence Fine.
PSSL	<i>The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra</i> , tr. Paul Harrison.
PTCC	<i>Plato: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles</i> , tr. R.G. Bury.
PTP1–6	<i>Proclus: Théologie platonicienne</i> , 6 vols., tr. H.D. Saffrey & L.G. Westerink.
PTSA1–6	<i>The Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. R. Morris & E. Hardy.
PTSD1–3	<i>The Dīgha-nikāya</i> , 3 vols., ed. T.W. Rhys Davids & J.E. Carpenter.
PTSF	<i>Plato: Theaetetus, Sophist</i> , tr. H.N. Fowler.
PTSKP	<i>Khuddakapāṭha with Commentary</i> , ed. Helmer Smith.
PTSM1–4	<i>The Majjhima-nikāya</i> , 4 vols., ed. V. Trenckner & R. Chalmers.
PTSN	<i>Suttanipāta</i> , ed. D. Anderson & Helmer Smith.
PTSP1–2	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> , 2 vols., ed. A.C. Taylor.
PTSS1–6	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. L. Feer.
PTSV	<i>The Visuddhi-Magga of Buddhaghosa</i> , ed. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.
PTWA	<i>The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding</i> , Longchen Rabjam, tr. Richard Barron.
PU	<i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i> , tr. S. Radhakrishnan.
PWEL	<i>The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines</i> , tr. E. Conze.
PWES	<i>Profiles in Wisdom</i> , Steven McFadden.
PWLS	<i>Philosophy as a Way of Life</i> , Pierre Hadot, tr. M. Chase.
QFL	<i>Quest for Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
RAIH	<i>The Religions of the American Indians</i> , Åke Hultkrantz, tr. Monica Setterwall.
RAQQ	<i>Risālah</i> , Abū al-Qasīm al-Qushayrī.
RBS1–2	<i>Plato: The Republic</i> , 2 vols., tr. P. Shorey.

RCML	<i>Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa</i> , Tulasīdāsa.
RDL	<i>Revelations of Divine Love</i> , Julian of Norwich, tr. C. Wolters.
RGET	<i>The Roots of Good and Evil</i> , tr. Nyanaponika Thera.
RHND	<i>Risālah-i Ḥaqq Numā</i> , Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh, ed. M.R. Jalālī.
RKSS	<i>Ratna-karaṇḍa-śrāvakācāra</i> , Samantabhadra.
RM	<i>Rabī'a the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam</i> , M. Smith.
RMI	<i>Readings from the Mystics of Islam</i> , M. Smith.
RMP	<i>A Reader in Manichaeism Middle Persian and Parthian</i> , M. Boyce.
RNNT	<i>Reading Neoplatonism</i> , Sara Rappe.
RNV1–4	<i>Rasā'il Shāh Nī'matullāhī Valī</i> , 4 vols., ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RQQQ	<i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah</i> , al-Qushayrī, ed. M. al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
RQR	<i>Risālat al-Quds wa Risālah Ghalaṭāt al-Sālikīn</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RRS	<i>The Revival of Religious Sciences</i> , al-Ghazālī, tr. Bankey Behari.
RSB1–2	<i>Plato's Republic</i> , 2 vols., tr. Paul Shorey.
RSRP	"Redemption of the Soul in Golden Age Religious Poetry," Raymond P. Scheindlin.
RSV	<i>The Holy Bible: The Revised Standard Version</i> .
RTHM	<i>Rangitāne: A Tribal History</i> , J.M. McEwen.
S1–	Numbered manuscripts discovered at Dūnhuáng (China), now in the Stein Collection at The British Library, London (Chinese).
SAC	"Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá," Miguel Bartolomé.
SADZ	<i>Staretz Amvrosy</i> , John Dunlop.
SAMB	<i>The Sovereign All-Creating Mind</i> , tr. E.K. Neumaier-Dargyay.
SATM	<i>The Shape of Ancient Thought</i> , Thomas McEvilley.
SBAT	<i>Sar Bachan: An Abstract of the Teachings of Soami Ji Maharaj</i> .
SBCP	<i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i> , tr. Wing-tsit Chan.
SBE	<i>Sultan Bahu</i> , J.R. Puri & K.S. Khak.
SBJT	<i>The Schocken Book of Jewish Mystical Testimonies</i> , Louis Jacobs.
SBNN	<i>Sūn Bū'èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù</i> , Chén Yīngníng.
SBP	<i>Sār Bachan Chhand-Band (Sār Bachan Poetry)</i> , Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh.
SBPS	<i>Sar Bachan Poetry (Selections)</i> , Soami Shiv Dayal Singh.
SBWG	<i>Srimad Bhagavatam</i> , tr. Swami Prabhavananda.
SCJS	<i>Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn jǐjǐào</i> , Wú Shòujū.
SCML	<i>The Secrets of Chinese Meditation</i> , Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk).
SCVJ	<i>Śrāvakācāra</i> , Vasunandin, ed. Hiralal Jain.
SD1–2	<i>Spiritual Discourses</i> , 2 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
SDAM	<i>Sāgāra-dharmāmṛta</i> , Āśādhara.
SDT1–4	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i> , 4 vols., tr. Gudo Wafu Nishijima & Chodo Cross.
SEIL	<i>The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola</i> , tr. Fr. Elder Mullan.
SEKI	<i>Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah</i> , Moshe Idel.
SEP1–3	<i>Moral Epistles</i> , 3 vols., Seneca, tr. R.M. Gummere.

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- SFAH *Sayrat-i Fakhr al-Ārifīn*, comp. Sikander Shah.
- SG *Spiritual Gems*, Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji.
- SHI *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, Swami Prabhavananda.
- SHLS *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, P. Schäfer, M. Schlüter & H.G. von Mutius.
- SHMG *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, ed. Dörries, Klostermann & Kroeger.
- SJMD “Studies in Jewish Mysticism,” ed. Joseph Dan & Frank Talmage.
- SKJH *Sefer ha-Kuzari le-Rabi Yehudah Halevi*, Yehuda Even-Shemuel.
- SMA *Ṣad Maydān*, Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. Qāsim Anṣārī.
- SMIK1–13 *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, 13 vols.
- SMSL *Subida del Monte Sión*, Fray Bernardino de Laredo.
- SNPM *Secret Native American Pathways* Thomas Mails.
- SNTB *Samyutta Nikaya*, tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
- SOHI *Sefer Oẓar Ḥayyim*, Isaac ben Samuel of Akko.
- SOMM *Sefer Oẓar Ma’amarim u-Mikhtavim*, Judah Aryeh Leib Alter.
- SOSJ *The Science of the Soul*, Sardar Bahadur Maharaj Jagat Singh.
- SOU *Signs of The Unseen*, tr. W.M. Thackston Jr.
- SP *The Sacred Pipe*, recorded & ed. Joseph Epes Brown.
- SPAU *Śrāvaka-prajñapti*, attrib. Umāsvātī.
- SPK *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, William Chittick.
- SPSP *The Serpent Power*, tr. John Woodroffe.
- SRKV *Shā’ar Ruah ha-Kodesh*, Ḥayyim Vital, ed. Yehuda Ashlag.
- SRMG *Scriptores Rerum Mirabilium Graeci*, ed. Antonius Westermann.
- SSE1–15 *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*, 15 vols., Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. T. Graham *et al.*
- SSEC *Śakti and Śākta*, John Woodroffe.
- SSII–10 *Sacred Songs of India*, 10 vols., V.K. Subramanian.
- SSJV *Samaṇ Suttan*, comp. Jinēndra Varṇī, tr. T.K. Tukol & K.K. Dixit.
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- SSTK *Seven Steps to the Tao*, Livia Kohn.
- SSV *The Siva Samhita*, tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
- STCG *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, A. Nightingale.
- STHT *Shōbōgenzō*, Eihei Dogen, tr. Hubert Nearman.
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- SUAR *The Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad-s*, tr. A.A. Ramanathan.
- SUPP *Śramaṇopāsaka-pratimā-pañcāśaka*, Haribhadra.
- SVWR *Secret of the Vajra World*, Reginald A. Ray.
- SYAK *Sefer Yetzirah*, tr. Aryeh Kaplan.
- SYNR “Six Yogas of Naropa,” Ringu Tulku.
- SYYP *The Science of Yoga*, I.K. Taimni.

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T1–100	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> , 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaigokyu.
TACD	<i>The Teachings of Ajahn Chah</i> , Ajahn Chah.
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TBLD	<i>The Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Maurice Walshe.
TBST	<i>Tzava 'at Harivash</i> , tr. Jacob Schochet.
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TEAK	<i>The Taoist Experience: An Anthology</i> , Livia Kohn.
TGAS	<i>Ta'lim-i Ghawṣīah</i> , Sayyid Shāh Gul Ḥasan Qalandar Qādirī.
TGH1–3	<i>Thrice-Greatest Hermes</i> , 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
TGLE	<i>Tao, The Great Luminant</i> , tr. Evan Morgan.
TK1–10	<i>The Treasury of Knowledge</i> , 10 vols., Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, tr. Kalu Rinpoché Translation Group.
TKLH	“Theurgic Trends in the Kabbalistic Teaching of Rabbi Simeon Lavi,” Boaz Huss.
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: A Digital Library of Greek Literature</i> .
TLSS	<i>Soeur Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus</i> , Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, tr. T.N. Taylor.
TMED	<i>Taoist Meditation</i> , tr. Thomas Cleary.
TMLT	<i>Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques</i> , ed. Livia Kohn.
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TMTN	<i>Tilopa's Mahamudra Instruction to Naropa in Twenty Eight Verses</i> , tr. Kunzang Tenzin.
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TOH1–4567	<i>A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons</i> , ed. Hakuji Ui <i>et al.</i>
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TPEQ	<i>The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters</i> , Stephen Eskildsen.
TPSN	<i>The Three Pure Land Sutras</i> , tr. H. Inagaki with H. Stewart.
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TSNI	<i>Theurgy and the Soul</i> , Gregory Shaw.

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USJM	“The Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism,” L. Jacobs.
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YJYS	<i>Yīnshìzǐ jìngzuò yǎngshēngfǎ</i> , Jiǎng Wéiqiáo.
YPAA	<i>Āchārya-Amitagati’s Yogasāra-Prābhṛta</i> , tr. S.C. Jain.
YSHB	<i>Yoga-Śāstra</i> , Hemacandra, ed. Muni Mahārāja Śrī Dharmavijaya & Śāstra Viçārada Jainācārya Śrī Vijaya Dharma Sūri.
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8.5 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

(KAVANOT–ZUÒWÀNG)

kavanot (He) (sg. *kavanah*) *Lit.* concentrations, intentions; verbal meditation formulae; among the kabbalists, specific concentration exercises; formulae used by Rabbi Isaac Luria (C16th) of Safed in northern Israel for ‘meditations’ – focused repetition of words, names, or prayers – or focused activities intended to help an individual approach the inner realms.

In Lurianic Kabbalism, the primary purpose of such practices was to bring about *tikkun ‘olam* (restoration of the divine order and harmony) by raising or restoring the divine sparks to their origin in God. During the creative process these sparks were separated from their source, and are now ubiquitous in all created things. The practitioners tried to bring about individual and collective redemption (return of the Jews from exile in the diaspora) by creating cosmic harmony and ‘repairing’ the universe, which was believed to have been ‘broken’ during the creative process. These practices included *yihudim* (‘unifications’ of the divine name) and *hazkarat shemot* (repetition of names).

Sometimes these techniques were more like magical formulae, since there were kabbalists who believed that by performing such meditations they could gain control over divine energies and celestial beings, bend the divine power according to their will, and bring about a union of the inner realms (*‘olam ha-aẓilut*, *‘olam ha-briah*, *‘olam ha-yeẓirah*). These kinds of theurgic or magical practices were known as *hashba’ot* (oaths), which were also used in an attempt to develop magical powers by gaining control over spirits and angels.

Those who practised *kavanot* in order to commune with God and to experience His presence regarded *hashba’ot* as sinful. Their goal was *hamshakhat ha-maḥshavah*, the drawing down of the divine ‘thought’, spirit or presence into their own being, for the purpose of *tikkun* (restoration).

The *kavanot* involved the repetition of names of God, often by splitting the name into its component letters and designating a word for each of these letters. *Ahyeh* (‘I will be’ or an emphatic ‘I am’; pron. *Ehyeh*), for example, which is the first part of the name God gave to Moses, “I will be what I will be” (cf. “I am that I am,”¹ “I am who I am.”²), is generally rendered as *YHWH* (*Yahweh*). By ‘expanding’ *YHWH*, associating a word with each letter, the four-letter name becomes four words, which are then used as a basis for meditation.

Kavanot can also be understood as mental exercises whose goal was to link the recital of prayers or the observance of particular *miẓvot* (divine commandments) to “specific stages in the dynamic chain of the divine worlds and thereby to reintegrate the latter by helping restore them to the places (in the divine order) they had occupied before their catastrophic fall”.³ In a *kavanah* taken from a seventeenth-century prayer book, for example, the devotee directs his heart towards *tikkun*, before carrying out any of the commandments. This was a commonly used *kavanah* and appears in more or less complete form in many texts:

I perform this for the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His *Shekhinah* (divine presence) to unite the name *yod-heh* (*YH*) with *waw-heh* (*WH*)⁴ by means of that hidden and concealed One, in the name of all Israel.

Louis Jacobs, "Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism," in JS2 p.108

During the sixteenth century, the disciples of Isaac Luria performed the *kavanot* as individuals. During the eighteenth century, however, *mekhavanim* (*kavanot* practitioners) in Europe and Jerusalem came together for group practice, a custom that continued into the early twentieth century. Many of their *kavanot* became used as the set prayers of the community and were later included in prayer books.

The prayers recited in synagogues have also been used as meditational devices in various periods of history. Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (1702–1777) of the *Bet-El* school of mystics in Jerusalem used the words of the prayers as symbolic visual designs and charts, an elaboration of the system of Rabbi Isaac Luria. He re-created the first word (*Ahyeh*) of the *Amidah* (standing) prayers, for example, more than a dozen times using different vowel points (Hebrew places vowel points with the letters to indicate pronunciation). This resulted in an expansion of the one word into several words. Then he similarly manipulated subsequent words in the prayer, ending again with manipulations of *Ahyeh*, which through transposition of its letters becomes *YHWH* (*Yahweh*). The letters and words were all arranged in a visually aesthetic design.

The first Hasidic master, the Ba'al Shem Tov, simply used particular prayers themselves as concentration devices, focusing his mind on the words, pronouncing them very slowly, repeating them many times. The purpose of this concentrated prayer was to ascend through the various heavenly realms to the highest level. According to the Ba'al Shem Tov, different prayers correspond to different inner realms. Rather than concentrating on any particular kabbalistic concept during prayer, the Ba'al Shem taught that the mind must be focused on repetition of the prayer itself, merging the attention into its words. The intention during such prayer is to rise in consciousness from one realm to the next, until the highest level is reached.

See also: **kavanah**, **zeruf**.

1. *Exodus* 3:14, *JPSI*, *KJV*.
2. *Exodus* 3:14, *JB*.
3. Gershom Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, *MIJS* p.102.
4. Phonetically, it should be *vav-heh* (*VH*), but both *YHWH* and *YHVH* are in common use.

kāyagatāsati (Pa) *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati*) related to the body (*kāyagatā*); mindfulness centred on, immersed in, or occupied with the body.

There are two meanings: restricted and general. In the general sense, *kāyagatāsati* refers collectively to six practices that comprise contemplation of the body, also known as *kāyānupassanā*. The three main Buddhist *suttas* that describe these six practices are the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.¹ In the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, the six practices are called *kāyagatāsati*. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, they are designated *kāyānupassanā*. *Kāyānupassanā* is a term that is also one of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

In the restricted sense, *kāyagatāsati* refers to meditation on the thirty-one or thirty-two parts of the body, as identified in Buddhist texts. This practice is described in the *suttas* as the fourth of six practices comprising contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). In the *Abhidhamma* (analytical), commentarial and associated literature, meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body is called *kāyagatāsati*,² where it is listed as the eighth of ten recollections or mindfulnesses (*anussati*) that are counted among the forty classical meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of *Theravāda* Buddhism. The commentaries add the brain to the thirty-one body parts listed in the *suttas*, making thirty-two.³

Meditation on the parts of the body is also known in the *suttas* as *asubhasaññā* (meditation on repulsiveness).⁴

Without mentioning any of the details, the practice of *kāyagatāsati* is mentioned in the *Dhammapada*, where the Buddha describes the benefits simply:

Those who earnestly practise mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*),
 who do not do what should not be done,
 and who steadfastly do what should be done,
 the impurities (*āsava*) of these mindful (*sata*)
 and fully aware (*sampajāna*) people come to an end.

Dhammapada 21:3–5; cf. DPN, DPR

The Pali *suttas* go into greater detail. According to the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*:

In this, a *bhikkhu* reviews this body from the soles of the feet upward and from the crown of the head downward, enclosed by skin and full of all manner of impurities: “There is in this body: the head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, stomach, excrement, bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.”

Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet

and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: “This is hill rice; this is red rice; these are beans; these are peas; this is millet; this is white rice” – so too, a *bhikkhu* reviews this same body as full of many kinds of impurity thus: “In this body, there are head hairs, . . . and urine.” As he abides thus – diligent, ardent, and resolute – his memories and intentions based on the household life are abandoned. . . . That too is how a *bhikkhu* develops mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*).

Majjhima Nikāya 119, Kāyagatāsati Sutta, PTSM3 p.90; cf. MDBB p.951, ANTB

Buddhaghosa elaborates on the theme in great detail,⁵ having first established, “What is intended here as mindfulness occupied with the body (*kāyagatāsati*) is meditation on the thirty-two aspects.” Firstly, he sets out, as his thesis:

No one who searches throughout the whole of this fathom-long carcass, starting upwards from the soles of the feet, starting downwards from the top of the head, and starting from the skin all round, ever finds even the minutest atom at all beautiful in it, such as a pearl, or a gem, or beryl, or aloes, or saffron, or camphor, or talcum powder. On the contrary, he finds nothing but the various very malodorous, offensive, drab-looking sorts of filth consisting of the head hairs, body hairs, and the rest. Hence it is said: “In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, . . . urine.”

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:47, PTSV p.241, PPVM p.238

Having advised the would-be practitioner to first find a skilled teacher, he considers the actual practice. Firstly, the meditator should begin by repeating the passage from the *suttas* aloud, dividing the various body parts into groups of five, repeating the names forwards and then backwards. For instance, “head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin”, followed by “skin, teeth, nails, body hair, head hair”. He then adds:

The recitation should be done verbally in this way a hundred times, a thousand times, even a hundred thousand times. For it is through verbal recitation that the meditation subject becomes familiar, and the mind being thus prevented from running here and there, the parts become evident and seem like the fingers of a pair of clasped hands, like a row of fence posts.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:56, PTSV p.243, PPVM p.239

The meditator should then mentally repeat the formulae, following which he should consider the colour of the various parts, their shape, the region of the body where they are to be found (essentially above or below the navel),

their location in or on the body, and what distinguishes them from other body parts. Of the latter, there are two categories – similar and dissimilar (“body hairs are not head hairs,” for example). Basically, there are seven aspects to each of the thirty-two body parts – the name, repeated aloud or mentally, plus the five other descriptive factors that identify them. All this, Buddhaghosa calls the “sevenfold skill in learning”.

Buddhaghosa now catalogues ten factors that influence the ability to focus the attention on these seven aspects. The meditator should reflect on the seven aspects relating to each body part “one after the other, in an orderly manner”, neither “too swiftly”, nor “too slowly”, and “warding off distraction” and the temptation to give up. These are the first four of the ten factors that relate to the ability to focus the attention. Regarding “warding off distraction”, he says:

Just as when a man is walking on a one-foot-wide cliff path, if he looks about here and there without watching his step, he may miss his footing and fall down the cliff, which is perhaps as high as a hundred men, so too, when there is outward distraction, the meditation subject gets neglected and the practice deteriorates. So he should give his attention to it, warding off distraction.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:65, PTSV p.244; cf. PPVM p.240

Further, during his practice, the meditator should mentally go beyond the basic concept of, for example, “head hair, body hair”, replacing it in his mind with the concept of “repulsive”. In this way, as he reviews the body parts, his mind is thinking more of their repulsive nature than of the parts themselves. Gradually, having learnt to keep his mind on all the body parts, one after the other, he will find that some body parts automatically get omitted, until finally only two, and then only one part remains in his mind and in his practice. Buddhaghosa is leading the meditator from many subjects as the focus of attention, to just one.

He gives an example of a hunter who hunts a monkey that lives in a grove of thirty-two palms trees. The monkey is in the first palm tree, and the hunter shoots an arrow at it and shouts. In response, the monkey runs off in a panic, leaping from one tree to another until it reaches the other end of the grove. The hunter follows it, and again shoots at it and shouts, and the monkey jumps from one tree to another until he returns to the first tree. The hunter then goes on shooting and shouting until the monkey realizes that whatever tree he is in, he will be shouted and shot at. Then he only jumps into a nearby tree when shouted and shot at. Ultimately he remains in just one tree, where he gets shot. The monkey, explains Buddhaghosa, is the mind, and the meditator is the hunter. The meditator-hunter goes on chasing the mind-monkey until it finally gives up and remains in one place, holding onto just one thought; and then it is caught.

Buddhaghosa goes on to speak about the balance between concentration (*samādhi*), effort (*paggaha*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) in the practice of *kāyagatāsati*. Too little effort leads to idleness; too much leads to agitation. And if a meditator focuses entirely on equanimity and peace of mind, then he may not gain sufficient concentration to destroy the imperfections (*āsava*) that stand in his way. A correct balance of all three is required for spiritual progress towards *nibbāna*.

All in all, Buddhaghosa identifies ten factors that determine the manner and quality of the attention that is given to the seven aspects of the body parts. Indefatigable analyst that he is, Buddhaghosa now launches into a detailed examination of how to apply the seven aspects and the ten factors to each of the thirty-two body parts. Starting with head hairs, he writes:

Firstly, the normal colour of head hair is black, like the colour of fresh *ariṭṭhaka* (probably soapberry) seeds. As to shape, they are the shape of long round measuring rods. As to region, they lie in the upper region (above the navel). As to location, their location is the wet inner skin that envelops the skull; it is bounded on both sides by the roots of the ears, in front by the forehead, and behind by the nape of the neck. As to demarcation, they are bounded below by the surface of their own roots, which are fixed by entering to the amount of the tip of a rice grain into the inner skin that envelops the head. They are bounded above by space, and all round by each other; there are no two hairs together – this is how they are demarcated by what is similar. Head hairs are not body hairs, and body hairs are not head hairs; being likewise not intermixed with the remaining thirty-one parts, the head hairs are a separate part – this is how they are demarcated by what is dissimilar. Such is the definition of head hairs as to colour and so on.

Their definition as to repulsiveness in the five ways, that is, by colour, *etc.*, is as follows. Head hairs are repulsive in colour as well as in shape, odour, habitat, and location.

For on seeing the colour of a head hair in a bowl of inviting rice gruel or cooked rice, people are disgusted and say, “This has got hairs in it. Take it away.” So they are repulsive in colour. Also when people are eating at night, they are likewise disgusted by the mere sensation of a hair-shaped *akka*-bark (*L. Calotropis gigantea*) or *makaci* (hemp) fibre. So they are repulsive in shape.

And the odour of head hairs, unless dressed with an oil pomade, scented with flowers, *etc.*, is most offensive. And it is worse still when they are put in the fire. Even if head hairs are not directly repulsive in colour and shape, still their odour is directly repulsive. Just as a baby’s excrement, as to its colour, is the colour of turmeric and, as to its shape, is the shape of a piece of turmeric root, and just as the bloated carcass of

a black dog thrown on a rubbish heap, as to its colour, is the colour of a ripe palmyra fruit and, as to its shape, is the shape of a mandolin-shaped drum left face down, and its fangs are like jasmine buds, and so even if both these are not directly repulsive in colour and shape, still their odour is directly repulsive, so too, even if head hairs are not directly repulsive in colour and shape, still their odour is directly repulsive.

But just as pot herbs that grow on village sewage in a filthy place are disgusting to civilized people and unusable, so also head hairs are disgusting since they grow on the sewage of lymph, blood, urine, dung, bile, phlegm, and the like. This is the repulsive aspect of the habitat.

And these head hairs grow on the heap of the other thirty-one parts as fungi do on a dung hill. And owing to the filthy place they grow in, they are quite as unappetizing as vegetables growing on a charnel ground, on a midden, *etc.*, as lotuses or water lilies growing in drains, and so on. This is the repulsive aspect of their location.

And as in the case of head hairs, so also the repulsiveness of all the parts should be defined in the same five ways by colour, shape, odour, habitat, and location. All, however, must be defined individually by colour, shape, region, location, and demarcation.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:83–89, PTSV pp.249–50; cf. PPVM pp.244–45

And so on through the other thirty-one body parts. Buddhaghosa then explains how, when the meditator has encompassed all of this in his meditation, the concentration attained leads to absorption in the first *jhāna* (state of meditative absorption). Firstly, during the process of meditation, as he has explained, one of the body parts comes to predominate as the focus of meditation. This simplifies matters significantly. Like a *kasīṇa* (physical object) that is taken as a focus for meditation, an image (*nimitta*) of this body part then becomes manifest in the meditator's mind. This is the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), defined by its colour, shape, region of the body, location, and demarcating features. As concentration develops, this changes into the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*), whose essence is the utter repulsiveness of this sole remaining body part. As the meditator focuses his concentration ever more deeply upon this counterpart image, he attains fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and entry to the first *jhāna*. This corresponds to the first level of *rūpaloka* (world of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes), and is probably equivalent to the astral realm of Western terminology.

In fact, Buddhaghosa explains that if many body parts have been cultivated as individual focuses of attention, each one becomes a separate *jhāna*:

As he cultivates and develops that counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*), absorption (*appanā*) arises in him, but only of the first *jhāna*. . . . And it arises singly in one to whom only one body part has

become evident, or who has reached absorption (*appanā*) in one part and makes no further effort about another. But several first *jhānas*, according to the number of parts, are produced in one to whom several parts have become evident, or who has reached *jhāna* in one and also makes further effort about another.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:141, PTSV p.265; cf. PPVM p.258

To illustrate his point, he mentions a certain elder who had developed each one of the thirty-two body parts as a focus of concentration, which – if he contemplated one by day and one by night – took him a fortnight to cycle through.

See also: **asubha bhāvanā**, **kāyānupassanā**, **nimitta**.

1. *Dīgha Nikāya 22 (Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta)*, PTSD2 pp.290–315; *Majjhima Nikāya 10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)*, 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), PTSM1 pp.55–63, PTSM3 pp.88–99.
2. *E.g. Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 3:105–21, 7:1, 8:42–144, PTSV pp.110–14, 197, 239–66.*
3. See also *Khuddaka Nikāya, Khuddakapāṭha 3, Dvattiṃsākāra, PTSKP p.2.*
4. *E.g. Anguttara Nikāya 10:60, Girimānanda Sutta, PTSA5 p.109.*
5. *E.g. Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:42–144, PTSV pp.239–66.*

kāyānupassanā (Pa), **kāyānupashyanā** (S) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of the body (*kāya*); the first of the four *anupassanās* comprising the four *satipaṭṭhānas* (foundations of mindfulness); a collection of six practices relating to mindfulness of the body.

The six practices, described in the *Kāyagatāsati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*¹ are:

1. *Ānāpānasati* (Pa). *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati*) of in-breathing (*āna*) and out-breathing (*apāna*).
2. *Iriyāpatha* (Pa). *Lit.* way (*patha*) of movement (*iriyā*); posture, mode of deportment; four basic postures to which mindfulness should be applied, *viz.* walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, *i.e.* whatever one is doing.
3. *Sampajañña* (Pa). *Lit.* full awareness, clear comprehension; remaining clearly aware and mindful in all things – moving about, remaining still, eating, drinking, chewing, savouring, talking, remaining silent, attending the calls of nature, and so on; full awareness and comprehension of body, actions, thoughts, and everything that passes through the mind.

4. *Kāyagatāsati* (Pa) *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati*) related to the body (*kāyagatā*); mindfulness centred on, immersed in, or occupied with the body; meditation on the thirty-one or thirty-two parts of the body. In some places,² *kāyagatāsati* is used synonymously with *kāyānupassanā*, to include all six forms of contemplation on the body.
5. *Dhātu-vavatthāna*. *Lit.* definition (*vavatthāna*) of the elements (*dhātu*); analysis of the elements, resolution into the elements; meditation on the four primary elements or elemental constituents that are traditionally said to comprise the physical body.
6. *Sīvathikā-manasikāra*. *Lit.* charnel-ground (*sīvathikā*) meditation (*manasikāra*); meditation at a place where bodies that have not been cremated are left to be eaten by animals and to decompose; meditation on the nine repulsive stages in the decomposition of a corpse; also known in the Pali *suttas* as *asubha-saññā* (meditation on repulsiveness).³

See also: **ānāpānasati**, **anupassanā**, **dhātu-vavatthāna**, **iriyāpatha**, **kāyagatāsati**, **sampajañña**, **satipaṭṭhāna**, **sīvathikā-manasikāra**.

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), *PTSD2* pp.290–315; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.55–63, *PTSM3* pp.88–99.
2. *E.g.* *Majjhima Nikāya* 119, *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, *PTSM3* pp.88–99.
3. *E.g.* *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:60, *Girimānanda Sutta*, *PTSA5* p.109.

kāyotsarg(a) (S/H), **kāusagga** (Pk) *Lit.* abandonment (*utsarga*) of the body (*kāya*); mental detachment from the body; an immobile bodily posture; meditation; concentration of the mind on something other than the body, while sitting or standing in a motionless posture; one of the six *āvashyakas*, the obligatory practices of a mendicant that are also recommended to the laity, who may practise them in a less stringent manner; one of the six kinds of internal austerity (*bhāva-tapas*), believed to eliminate karmic matter from the soul; often practised briefly as a part of other rites such as *sāmāyika* (serenity, tranquillity, equanimity), *pratikramaṇa* (confession of wrongdoing), mental worship (*bhāva pūjā*), and other forms of worship and meditation.

Kāyotsarga may be performed frequently, albeit briefly, during the performance of such rites as *pratikramaṇa* or it may be practised for longer periods of at least one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes). During periods of ritual fasting such as *poshadhopavāsa* (fasting on the eighth and fourteenth days of the lunar fortnight), a person may spend the entire night meditating in the

kāyotsarga standing posture. Some Jain monks have devoted long periods of their life to *kāyotsarga*, as their primary activity.

Kāyotsarga has two aspects – *dravya* (actual) *kāyotsarga*, which relates to the stillness of the bodily posture, and *bhāva* (mental) *kāyotsarga*, which refers to the stillness of the mind. *Kāyotsarga* is regarded as the ultimate form of *vyutsarga* (renunciation).

Although Jain texts describe both sitting and standing postures, *kāyotsarga* is most commonly associated with a standing position. The individual stands upright, legs a few inches apart, arms loose at the side, hands facing inwards and fingers pointing to the ground, as often seen in images of standing *Tīrthankaras*. This posture is known as the *kāyotsarga* posture. Seating postures used for *kāyotsarga* include the traditional yogic lotus posture (*padmāsana*), the half-lotus posture, simple cross-legged posture, and squatting on one's heels, although Jain texts mention numerous small variations.¹

Hemachandra (c.1088–1173) describes *kāyotsarga* as “standing silent in meditation without any movement other than the involuntary movements of the body such as breathing, for a definite time until the *pañcha-namaskāra* (a Jain *mantra*) is recited”.² He reproduces the traditional vow to practise *kāyotsarga*:

Making an additional effort, making penance, making purification, eliminating evil from myself, I stand in the *kāyotsarga* in order to make an end to sinful acts. With the exception of inhaling and exhaling, coughing and sneezing, yawning and hiccoughing, breaking wind, giddiness and swooning, very slight movements of the limbs, the eyes and the saliva, and similar involuntary acts, may my *kāyotsarga* be unbroken and unimpaired; until I have completed the recitation of the *namaskāra* to the blessed *arhats*, I shall abandon my body in the standing position, in silence, and in meditation.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 3:130, YSHB pp.607–11; cf. in JYMS p.213

He also mentions other reasons for interrupting *kāyotsarga*, like going to the assistance of a living creature such as saving a mouse from a cat, or because he or someone close at hand has been bitten by a snake or attacked by robbers.³ He is depicting the ideal, when he writes:

At dead of night, he stands in the *kāyotsarga* outside the city wall, and the bullocks taking him for a post rub their flanks against his body.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 3:144, YSHG p.93, in JYMS p.215

See also: **āvashyaka** (8.4).

1. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* pp.214–15.
2. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:130, *YSHB* p.693, in *JYMS* p.214.
3. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:124, *YSHB* p.610, in *JYMS* p.215.

keisaku, kyōsaku (J), jǐngcè, xiāng bǎn (C) *Lit.* warning stick, awakening stick; an encouragement stick; said to symbolize the delusion-destroying sword of Mañjuśrī, the *bodhisattva* of wisdom (*prajñā*) in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism; used by the *jikijitsu*, the elder monk responsible for supervising activities, including meditation, in a *Zen* monastery; one of a number of sticks used in the *Zen* tradition for both ceremonial and practical purposes. *Keisaku*, a phonetic rendering of the Chinese *jǐngcè*, is the term preferred by the *Rinzai* school. *Kyōsaku* is an alternative rendering used in *Sōtō* monasteries. The meditation trainer is also known as a *jikidō* or *godō*.

A *keisaku* or *kyōsaku* can take various forms. It can be a thin, flat and flexible wooden stick or slat, two to five feet in length, generally made of bamboo, often decorated with calligraphy, and sometimes with a rounded handle at one end and a flat area about two to three inches wide at the other. Warning sticks for winter use are generally made of thicker wood for use on heavier clothing.

The *jikijitsu* is the monastery's disciplinarian, though not necessarily of an unkindly demeanour. He is responsible for the smooth and orderly running of the monastery. During the sessions of group meditation in the meditation hall, whether of *zazen* (sitting meditation) or *kinhin* (walking mindfully between sessions of meditation), he walks around among the meditating students with the 'warning stick' or 'encouragement stick'. Whenever he observes that the attention of a monk is wandering or that he is falling asleep, he strikes him on the back, sometimes several times, usually in the muscular area between the shoulder blades and the spine. The blows are usually light, though they may produce a loud noise and sound frightening to newcomers. They may produce a momentary pain if executed with sufficient strength, but they generally cause no injury.

The purpose is compassionate rather than punitive or with intent to cause hurt or injury. It is intended to alert the student to his state of mind or lapse in posture, helping him to regain focus, and to spur him on to greater efforts. Often a blow will relieve muscle cramps. Depending on the school, the blows may only be delivered upon the request of the student, who bows his head and puts his palms together with the fingers pointing upwards, exposing each shoulder to receive a strike as the *jikijitsu* passes in front of him. In some instances the meditation trainer may also verbally exhort the monks to make greater efforts to concentrate, with greater or lesser vehemence, depending upon his nature.

This is the standard description. Stories, however, are prevalent of meditation trainers who are more violent in their use of the stick than its purpose warrants, and it seems clear that the manner of its use depends upon the temperament of the teacher. Some teachers do not use a stick at all, others are more 'enthusiastic'. Sometimes a student can request that a sign against the use of the stick be placed above his sitting place.

Powerful whacks and vehement exhortation may be counterproductive, as some diary entries from an initially struggling and disconsolate Western student reveal. A *rōshi* is a title given to a *Zen* master:

DECEMBER 1ST, 1953. Raining incessantly, *zendō* (meditation hall) uncomfortably cold and damp. Wore longjohns and wool shirt and two sweaters and wool robe and two pairs of wool socks, but couldn't stop shivering. *Godō*'s bellowing and roaring more of a distraction than his wallops with *kyōsaku*. Tortured by pain in legs and back. Thoughts racing wildly. Flopped from *agura* to *seiza* to *hanka* (meditation postures), manipulating my three cushions in every conceivable way, but couldn't escape pain. . . .

DECEMBER 2ND, 1953. At 5 a.m. *dokusan* (private meeting) told Harada Rōshi the pain in my legs was agonizing. "I can't go on." . . . "Do you want a chair?" He looked at me tauntingly. . . . "No, I won't use a chair even if my legs drop off!" . . . "Good! With that spirit you're bound to become enlightened." . . .

Terrific whack by the *kyōsaku* just when my concentration was beginning to jell and I fell apart. Damn that *godō*! "Straighten your back, sit firmly, centre your energy in your *hara* (centre of balance)!" he yells. But how the devil do I put my energy into my *hara*? When I try, my back is stabbed with pain. Must ask Harada Rōshi about this. . . .

DECEMBER 3RD, 1953. Pain in legs unbearable. Why don't I quit? It's imbecilic trying to sit with this gruesome pain and taking these senseless wallops of the *kyōsaku* plus *godō*'s insane shouting, it's masochism pure and simple. Why did I leave Ryutaku-ji, why did I ever leave the United States? But I can't quit now, what will I do? I must get *satori*, I must. . . .

Crash, bang! The whole *zendō* is shaking; what's happened? Shouldn't have, but turned my head to see. The Old Lion has just broken the longest *kyōsaku* in the *zendō* across the back of Monjū's shrine. "You're all lazy!" he yells. "You have within your grasp the most precious experience in the world, yet you sit dreaming. Wake up and throw your lives into the struggle, otherwise *satori* will elude you forever!" What strength of spirit, what power in that frail five-foot-three, eighty-four-year-old body!

P.K., in Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK pp.216–17, 221–22

Later, the student does leave the monastery in search of another teacher. In a diary extract almost three years later, he writes:

NOVEMBER 25TH, 1956. Nakagawa Rōshi took me to Yasutani Rōshi. "He will be a good teacher for you, he is in Harada Rōshi's line, his disciples are chiefly laymen, you need not stay in a monastery but can live in Kamakura and attend his *sesshin* in the Tokyo area."

DECEMBER 3RD, 1956. Joined my first *sesshin* at Yasutani Rōshi's mountain temple. An ideal place for *zazen*, it nestles high in the hills away from the noises of the city. A scant eight participants, probably because the *sesshin*'s only three days and hard to get to. Atmosphere's real homey, the *rōshi* eats with us family style. And what a charming twist: the *godō*'s a sixty-eight-year-old grandmother, the cook and leader of the chanting a sixty-five-year-old nun. Between them they manage the entire *sesshin*! Each sits like a *buddha* and acts like one – gentle, compassionate, and thoroughly aware.

What a huge relief not to be driven by a savage *kyōsaku* or verbally belted by the *rōshi* at *dokusan*. The manual work after breakfast is stimulating and the afternoon bath immensely soothing. Am completely at ease with Yasutani Rōshi. His manner's gentle yet penetrating; he laughs easily and often.

P.K., in Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK pp.224–25

See also: **jikijitsu** (7.1).

kekka fuza (J) *Lit.* sitting in (*za*) the full lotus (*kekka*) position; the full lotus posture used in *zazen*. See **zabuton**.

khayānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of decay (*khaya*). See **anupassanā**.

khregs gcod (T) *Lit.* breaking through (*gcod*) the hardness (*khregs*); cutting or breaking through resistance, rigidity, or solidity; breakthrough; phonetically rendered as *trekchö*; also translated as 'total relaxation'.

The practice of *khregs gcod* is intended to induce a direct revelation of the self-originated, primordial and pristine awareness (*rig pa*) – the inherent *buddha*-nature of all sentient beings, that is regarded as the foundation of all mind, all consciousness, and all phenomena – and thereby to break through the otherwise endless stream of illusory thoughts and appearances that create duality and that seem to constitute – but actually veil – Reality. *Khregs gcod* is the first of the two main meditation practices according to the Tibetan *Dzogchen* tradition of the *Nyingma* school of Buddhism and the *Bönpo* tradition, the second being known as *thod rgal* (direct crossing). Although the *Nyingma* and *Bönpo* teachings of *Dzogchen* are the same, they each have separate lineages of masters, which they trace back to at least the eighth century CE.

Khregs gcod is also translated as ‘total relaxation’ because it involves complete relaxation of all tensions and rigidities of body, speech and mind, since it is these that result in the continuous distractions of the mind. Only when all these are relaxed is it possible to see things as they really are, without the veils of illusory thinking and perception. For the same reason, *Dzogchen* itself is also called the “great relaxation (*lhod pa chen po*)”.

According to early *Dzogchen* teachings, spiritual practice entails effort, which results in delusion, since effort and the oneness of Reality do not co-exist. Early *Dzogchen* meditation practices therefore consisted of simply recognizing the pure, luminous (T. *'od gsal*, S. *prabhāsvara*) and empty (T. *stong pa*, S. *shūnyatā*) condition of one own innate awareness. Later texts, however, influenced by Indian tantrism, introduced more specific meditation practices. These included meditation on light and darkness, as well as the more obviously tantric practices concerning the control of the body’s subtle life energies (*prāṇa*). Among these various practices, *khregs gcod* belongs to the early strata of teachings known as the ‘mind category (*sems sde*)’; *thod rgal* belongs to the later, tantric group of practices, known as the ‘esoteric instruction category (*man ngag gi sde*, S. *upadesha*)’.

The essence of *khregs gcod* meditation is to cultivate a state of primordial and pristine awareness both in meditation and while dealing with everyday life. By ‘cutting off’ the stream of mental activity that creates the illusion of past and future, the practice leads the meditator into this state through the gateway of the present moment. *Khregs gcod* is related to the essential purity and emptiness (*stong pa nyid*, S. *shūnyatā*) of everything, in the absence of concepts and appearances. It does not attempt to purify or to transform the mind, for it is founded on the belief that the innate, pristine or “natural state” of awareness is already pure and has no need of transformation. Lopon Tenzin Namdak (b.1926), the foremost teacher of the *Bönpo Dzogchen* tradition in modern times, explains:

The method is to observe how thoughts arise, how they remain, and how they go. We look back at our mind and observe it. But we do not interfere or modify anything; that is not the method. We just let things be and watch what happens. We will observe that when we do not interfere with them or try to change them, then thoughts will dissolve of themselves and leave nothing behind. What do we find? We find that there is nothing there. This natural state is inexpressible and inconceivable. It is empty, but this emptiness is not just nothing, because there is an awareness there. But this awareness or *rig pa* is not the same as our ordinary consciousness (*rnam shes*). That consciousness is dualistic; there is a subject that apprehends and an object that is apprehended. But here there is an awareness (*rig pa*) where the seer and the seen are united and inseparable, like fire and warmth.

However, when we practise the natural state, it is not necessary to make an examination and check what is subject and what is object. In the natural state, the practitioner does not examine anything; one is simply *rang rig* or self-aware.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN pp.189–90

The practice of *khregs gcod* is regarded as an essential prelude to that of *thod rgal*, in order that the mind may understand the true nature of the visions and other experiences of *thod rgal*:

In order to practise *thod rgal*, first we must realize the natural state. So *khregs gcod*, which means just remaining in the natural state, undistracted by thoughts, is something that is always necessary in *Dzogchen* practice. If visions arise and we become attached to them, then this is no different from *saṃsāra*. When we have visions in the practice of *thod rgal*, we have no grasping (*'dzin pa*) at them because we are in the natural state. In the vision of daily life, on the contrary, we are constantly grasping at one thing after another. . . .

Without *khregs gcod*, we cannot practise *thod rgal*. Visions may come, but they will not be *thod rgal* visions. First we must practise *khregs gcod* and make our remaining in the natural state stable; then we can go on to practise *thod rgal*. In this way our visions will be stable. In *thod rgal* both pure and impure visions can come, but gradually the visions will become clearer and clearer, and then more and more integrated with our normal vision. In the end this integrated vision will dissolve into the natural state, both *thod rgal* vision and normal vision.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN pp.198–99

Patrul Rinpoche says the same:

If the mind and the senses have been purified, then the individual will perceive the world with pure vision (*dag snang*); one will perceive it as the pure dimension of the *maṇḍala*. But if the mind, one's internal awareness, is still covered with layers of obscuration, these obscurations will distort one's vision and one will perceive the world with impure karmic vision (*ma dag las snang*); one will perceive the world as an ordinary ignorant sentient being does, a being who lives within the dimensions of . . . rebirth. Thus, in *Dzogchen*, it is not a case of transforming one kind of vision into another, as the practitioner does in *tantra*. Rather, one purifies oneself by entering into the state of contemplation, which lies beyond all karmic conditioning, and then vision manifests spontaneously. That is why one must thoroughly

master *khregs gcod* before practising *thod rgal*. Otherwise, because of heavy karmic habits inherited from the immemorial past, a time without beginning, impure karmic visions will reappear, and one will find oneself caught up once more in the cycles of *samsāra*.

Patrul Rinpoche, Special Teaching, GLTS pp.150–51

Although not all authorities agree, Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche (b. 1951) explains that it is both helpful and traditional for *khregs gcod* and *thod rgal* to be preceded by various preliminary exercises, external and internal. “Attaining stability and proficiency in the practice of the view” means that the practitioner establishes himself in the *Dzogchen* view, understanding, or perception of Reality. In this context, “empowerment”, “transmission” and “pointing out” imply the reception of a mind-to-mind influx of consciousness from master to disciple, also known as ‘introduction’. While this does not convey full awareness of the ultimate, pristine awareness, it provides sufficient for the practitioner to have an idea of what he is aspiring to:

A practitioner traditionally begins by contemplating the general outer preliminaries, the four mind-changings (*i.e.* preciousness of the human body, impermanence and death, cause and effect regarding actions, and the sufferings of *samsāra*). Following this, to the best of one’s ability, one practises the special inner preliminaries of ‘four times one-hundred thousand’: *viz.* prostrations, Vajrasattva recitation, *maṇḍala* offerings, and *guru yoga*. After that, one practises the *yi dam* (*i.e.* personal deity worship) in order to receive the blessings of the lineage so that the view of the main practice can be pointed out. After attaining stability and proficiency in the practice of the view for some time, then comes *thod rgal* practice.

By gazing with semi-closed eyes toward the sun’s rays in the morning and in the afternoon, there will manifest rainbows, lights, rays, big and small circles, syllables, and the forms of deities. Look, while mingling the practice with mind essence, and you will perceive the *sambhoga-kāya* (body of bliss) realm of unified luminosity and emptiness, without letting the view remain as a mere concept. The essential point of *Dzogchen* is to be able to see directly.

To put *thod rgal* into practice, one must first receive the instructions from a qualified master, having already achieved some stability in the view of *khregs gcod*. One must receive empowerment, transmission, and continual oral instruction. There is a reason for these essentials. To apply the practice of *thod rgal* to enhance the view of *khregs gcod* without stability in the view to begin with, is quite pointless. It can also be a little dangerous, become frightening, and make the mind unstable and disturbed. The detailed information on *thod rgal* should

be kept away from faithless people, and from those who have not received the proper transmission. So, it's important to keep *thod rgal* teachings private and secret.

Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen; cf. UMDC pp.189–90

See also: **Dzogchen**, 'ja' lus (8.3), **navayāna**, **thod rgal**.

kill the buddha (C. *shā fó*) Part of a famous saying credited to Línjì Yìxuán (d.866), Chinese founder of the *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) school of *Chán* (J. *Zen*) Buddhism. The fuller saying runs: “If you meet a *buddha*, kill the *buddha* (*shā fó*); if you meet a patriarch, slay the patriarch; if you meet a *luóhàn* (enlightened one), kill the *luóhàn*; if you meet your parents, kill your parents. . . . In this way, you will attain liberation.”¹

Línjì used shock treatment in order to surprise the mind of the student into the realization of spiritual truths. His methods included sudden shouts or exclamations into a student's ear, physical blows, and nonsensical or unrelated responses to questions. The point of this particular saying is to bring about the understanding that every person is complete in himself and is already a potential *buddha*, so there is no need to rely upon or unduly revere any other person. All such reliance lies in the mind, and is a source of weakness to be overcome. Truth is found by focusing within oneself and by self-realization, which cannot be given by anyone else.

The *Línjì* school became the most popular and widespread of the five schools of *Chán* Buddhism. It was also the inspiration behind the *Rinzai* school of *Zen* Buddhism, where the saying was used as a *kōan*, in forms such as, “If you meet demons, kill the demons; if you meet *buddhas*, kill the *buddhas*,” sometimes adding “then for the first time you will see clearly”. In other words, whatever you encounter, inside or out, eliminate it, because it is blocking the way to deeper realization.

Línjì Yìxuán puts the point very clearly. He also introduces the notion that enlightenment involves living an ordinary life and doing nothing – something that is quite out of the ordinary:

Followers of the Way, if you want insight into the *Dharma* as it really is, do not be taken in by the deluded views of others. Whatever you encounter, whether within or without, kill it at once. If you meet a *buddha*, kill the *buddha* (*shā fó*); if you meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch; if you meet a *luóhàn*, kill the *luóhàn*; if you meet your parents, kill your parents; if you meet your family, kill your family. In this way, you will gain liberation, will not be entangled with things, will pass freely anywhere you wish to go. . . . I have no trick to give people. I merely cure disease and set people free. . . . My views are

few. I merely put on clothing and eat meals as usual, and pass my time without doing anything. You people coming from the various directions have all made up your minds to seek the Buddha, seek the *Dharma*, seek emancipation, and seek to leave the three worlds. Crazy people! If you want to leave the three worlds, where can you go? ‘*Buddha*’ and ‘*patriarchs*’ are terms of praise and also bondage. Do you want to know where the three worlds are? They are right in your mind, which is now listening to the *Dharma*.

Línjì yǔlù (Record of Línjì), T47 1985:500b21–c14;
cf. in HOCP p.119, SBCE pp.447–48, ZTML p.52

The *Chán* Buddhist Master Sheng-yen (1930–2009) observes:

Obviously, *Línjì* is not advocating that one should actually kill *buddhas*, parents, and teachers; but what is the point of such a seemingly violent attitude? Can this really be considered a method of practice conducive to Buddhist enlightenment and compassion? Indeed it can. *Línjì*’s point is that we must ‘slay’ these things as objects of attachment or self-expectation. We must be relentlessly self-reliant (*zìxìn*) and cut off all conditional thoughts in our minds until there is nothing further to cut off. When all such discriminations – all such naïve views that shape the small self and its world – are exhausted, we will truly be ‘ordinary, with nothing to do’.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCP p.119

1. *Línjì yǔlù (Record of Línjì), T47 1985:500b; cf. ZTML p.52.*

kinhin, kyōgyō (J) *Lit.* walking; in *Zen* Buddhism, walking meditation. See **cankama**.

knocking Recollection or concentration of the mind at the ‘doorway’ or ‘entrance’ to the heavenly realms; a metaphor drawn from Jesus’ saying, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you,”¹ a saying generally understood in Christian literature as a reference to determined prayer as a means of gaining the grace of God, entry to the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life, though not necessarily in this life. As the fourth-century Persian Christian, Aphrahat, says:

Let us knock at the door of heaven, that it may be opened before us,
 and we may enter in through it.

Aphrahat the Persian Sage, Demonstrations 6:1, HEDA p.363

Or as Symeon the New Theologian writes, “To everyone who knocks resolutely, he opens the gates of his kingdom.”² And likewise, Joseph Ḥazzāya:

Prayer stands always at the door, knocks and does not go away until it has opened the door of the abode of the divine Essence.

Joseph Ḥazzāya, Letters 5, WS7 p.182

Perhaps, the most definitive use of the metaphor is in the gnostic text, the *Teachings of Silvanus*, who writes:

Knock upon yourself as upon a door, and walk upon yourself as on a straight road. For if you walk on the road, it is impossible for you to go astray. And if you knock with Wisdom, you knock upon hidden treasures. . . . Do not tire of knocking on the door of the *Logos*, and do not cease walking in the way of Christ. Walk in it so that you may receive rest from your labours. . . . Open the door for yourself that you may know the One who is. Knock upon yourself that the Word may open for you. For he is the ruler of faith and the sharp sword, having become all for everyone, because he wishes to have mercy on everyone. My son, prepare yourself to escape from the cosmic rulers (*archons*) of darkness and of this kind of realm that is full of powers. But if you have Christ, you will conquer this entire world. That which you will open for yourself, you will open. That which you will knock upon for yourself, you will knock upon, benefiting yourself.

Teachings of Silvanus 106–7, 103, 117; cf. TS pp.56–59, 50–51, 78–79

Jesus uses similar imagery in his parable of the bridegroom and the ten virgins, of whom five wisely keep oil in their lamps, and five are negligent. When the bridegroom comes, the wise ones whose lamps are lit, gain admittance. But the others, who have gone to find oil at the last minute, miss their opportunity, and when they do return they are turned away. The wise ones who have prepared their lamps are the disciples who have practised meditation; the unwise ones are those who neglect their meditation until it is too late.³ As a Manichaean psalmist writes:

We knocked at the door, the door was opened to us,
we went in with the bridegroom.
We were numbered among the virgins
in whose lamps oil was found.

Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.170

In *Revelations*, the metaphor is reversed. Here, it is Jesus who knocks at the door, offering divine grace to all who will open themselves to him:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:
 if any man hear my Voice, and open the door,
 I will come in to him,
 and will sup with him, and he with me.

Book of Revelation 3:20, KJV

A similar imagery appears in the *Song of Songs*, where the beloved ‘knocks’ at the lover’s door. The “beloved” is the spiritual form of a master, and the ‘lover’ is the soul who is dedicated to him. In deep meditation, asleep to the world but awake within, the soul says:

I sleep, but my heart is awake.
 I hear my beloved knocking.

Song of Songs 5:2, JB

And the beloved replies that he is ready to welcome her, and shower divine grace (“dew”) upon her:

Open to me, my sister, my love,
 my dove, my perfect one,
 for my head is covered with dew,
 my locks with the drops of night.

Song of Songs 5:2, JB

See also: **door** (8.2).

1. *Matthew 7:7, KJV.*
2. Symeon the New Theologian, *On Faith, Philokalia, PCT4* p.24.
3. *Matthew 25:1–13; cf. Luke 12:36, 13:25.*

kōan (J), **gōng àn** (C) *Lit.* public case, public record; a *Zen* (J) or *Chán* (C) Buddhist teaching device; a *Zen* riddle; commonly, a question posed by a master to a disciple as a characteristically paradoxical or enigmatic riddle with no obvious answer in terms of conventional logic; can also be or include an anecdote, a poem, a dialogue, or a statement. An appropriate answer is often equally paradoxical or may be an entirely wordless flash of insight (*satori*); it can also be an action such as a gesture or other body movement. The intention is to move the mind from its normal style of logical thinking into a broader awareness and perspective, to illustrate the paradoxical and limited nature of dualistic thinking, and to test a student’s level of spiritual progress. The Japanese *kōan* is a phonetic rendering of the Chinese *gōng àn*.

Literally, *gōng àn* means ‘magistrate’s (*gōng*) bench (*àn*)’, and the term originally referred to a legal case or precedent. In popular parlance, *gōng*

àn simply means a ‘story’ or ‘incident’, and is used in modern China for a detective story. Buddhist use of the term developed during the *Táng* dynasty (618–907) when collections of the sayings of *Chán* masters or their brief dialogues with disciples or others, along with further comments from later masters, were in circulation. Each incident or mini-dialogue was known as a *gōng àn* – a ‘public case’ or ‘public record’ cited by later masters with the intention of deepening a student’s understanding of Buddhist principles and the true nature of the *Dharma*. The citation also gained credence from the authority of earlier masters of that particular lineage.

The use of the *gōng àn* as a specific teaching aid probably arose during the late *Táng* and early *Sòng* (960–1279) dynasties, at a time when *Chán* masters were developing innovative methods of conveying an understanding of the enlightenment experience to their students. These methods included controversial shock techniques such as striking the students, shouting in their ears, bizarre behaviour, and giving paradoxical or meaningless answers to questions. Collections of *gōng àns* circulated among students, who used them for inspiration and understanding in their quest for enlightenment. First mentioned as a teaching aid in connection with *Chán* master Nányuàn Huìyóng (860–930), the first collection of *gōng àns* is attributed to master Fényáng Shànzhāo (942–1024) of the *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) school, many of which were his own compositions.

The introduction of the *gōng àn* as a teaching aid gave rise to a new variety of meditation. Having received a *gōng àn* from his master, a monk would focus his attention upon it in meditation, repeating it continuously in his mind in the attempt to penetrate its hidden, inner meaning in an intuitive rather than intellectual manner.

Gōng àns commonly involve an anecdote, often contrived at a later date as a framework for a previously existing saying or *gōng àn*. There are many examples. According to a *gōng àn* attributed to the *Chán* master Xiāngyán Zhìxián (d.898), a man hanging by his teeth high up in a tree is asked, “Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?”¹ The monk Xiānglín Chéngyuǎn (908–987) is said to have responded to the question, “To exhaust himself with long sitting”² – Bodhidharma’s journey from India to China would have involved significant and tiring travelling. On the other hand, an answer attributed to master Zhàozhōu Cōngshěn (778–897) was, “The cypress tree in front of the hall.”³ Various other responses have been given by *Zen* masters.⁴ Like other *gōng àns*, a variety of responses are deemed to be valid.

The query concerning Bodhidharma’s motivation appears in a twelfth-century collection of a hundred *kōans* brought to Japan by Shinchi Kakushin (1207–1298), where it is known as *Hekiganroku* (‘Blue Cliff Record’, C. *Bìyán lù*). The *Hekiganroku* was originally compiled by the *Chán* monk Xuědòu Zhòngxiǎn (980–1052), who added a verse to each *kōan* that was often as paradoxical as the *kōan* itself. This collection was then expanded by the monk Yuánwù Kèqín (1063–1135), who added an introduction and commentary to each *kōan* and its accompanying verse.

The *kōan* complete with the anecdote is a part of a well-known thirteenth-century compilation of forty-eight *kōans* known as the *Mumonkan* (C. *Wúménguān*) collected by master Wúmén Huìkǎi (1183–1260). In a word-play worthy of a *kōan*, the title can mean either ‘Wúmén’s Pass’/‘Wúmén’s Barrier’ or ‘Gateless Gate’/‘Pass with No Door’. The *Mumonkan* opens with the *kōan*-like verse:

The Great Way has no gate,
yet a thousand roads approach it.
Once through this barrier,
walk freely through heaven and earth.

Mumonkan, Preface

The very first *kōan* of the *Mumonkan* is another well-known classic, known as the *mu kōan* (C. *wú gōng àn*) or the ‘no’ *kōan*. A monk asks master Zhàozhōu, “Does a dog have a *buddha*-nature?” To which Zhàozhōu replies, “No (C. *wú*, J. *mu*).” The response is surprising because, according to *Zen* doctrine, the essential Reality of the Buddha is all-pervading, and therefore everything is imbued with the *buddha*-nature, including the dog. The point is that only one who has realized this can see the inherent oneness in everything. Zhàozhōu’s answer highlights the distinction between direct personal experience or realization and knowing the intellectual answer. If a person is seeing a dog as a dog, as a separate entity, then he is not seeing the *buddha*-nature of the dog. However, *wú* also means ‘no, not, nothing, nothingness, nought, nil, zero, without, un-, has not, is not,’ etc., so Zhàozhōu’s response could have meant ‘nothingness’, and have been a pointer to the essential emptiness that underlies all materio-mental phenomena. Things and sentient beings alike lack any independent or absolute identity; everything depends upon something else for its seeming existence and apparent individuality. Zhàozhōu no doubt had all possible answers in mind when giving his enigmatic response.

The *mu kōan* is regarded as particularly efficacious in enabling an initial insight into the nature of Reality and enlightenment. It is often the first *kōan* given to a student, and with meditation and the passage of time its depth is increasingly understood. It is said that to gain an initial understanding of *mu* is to have entered the ‘world of *mu*’.

Among the various *kōan* collections, none have enjoyed the same status as the *Hekiganroku* and the *Mumonkan*. Other well-known collections include the twelfth-century *Shōyōroku* (J. ‘Book of Serenity’, C. *Cóngróng lù*) and the *Nempyō Sambyaku Soku* (J. ‘Three Hundred *Kōans* with Commentaries’), a thirteenth-century collection compiled by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), founder of the school of *Sōtō Zen*.

Many *kōans* are well known. The Chinese master Línjì Yìxuán (d.866), founder of the *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) school of *Chán* (J. *Zen*) Buddhism is famous

for the saying that later became a *kōan*: “If you meet the Buddha, kill him.” The full saying runs, “If you meet a *buddha* on the road, kill the *buddha* (C. *shā fō*); if you meet the patriarchs, kill the patriarchs; if you meet a *luóhàn* (S. *arhat*, noble one, enlightened one), kill the *luóhàn*; if you meet your parents, kill your parents; in this way, you will attain liberation.”⁵ *Línjì* means that the real Buddha is not something external or separate from one’s own being. The real Buddha is one’s own *buddha*-nature, which is truly understood only when all perception of duality is relinquished.

Case forty-three of the *Mumonkan* provides another classic example:

Shōushān held out his short staff (*shippei*, staff of office) and said, “If you call this a short staff, you oppose its reality; if you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. Now quickly, say what it is!”

Mumonkan, Case 43, in “*kōan*,” ODB

The point here is that Truth or Reality is all-pervading, present in everything. Everything, therefore, is Reality if perceived aright. On the other hand, the staff has an empirical, relative reality as a staff. In their own context, both statements are true.

Similarly:

A monk told Zhàozhōu, “I have just entered this monastery. I beg you to teach me.”

Zhàozhōu asked, “Have you eaten your rice porridge?”

The monk replied, “I have.”

“Then,” said Zhàozhōu, “go and wash your bowl.” At that moment the monk was enlightened.

Mumonkan, Case 7, GGES p.12

The meaning is that Truth or Reality is once again all-pervading, at all times, if one can only let go of the sense of duality and be ‘normal’. According to another *kōan*:

The fifty-second patriarch, Kōun Ejō came to Master Dōgen. One day when he came for guidance, he heard the *kōan*, “A single hair threads many holes,” and he came immediately to enlightenment.

In the evening he bowed ceremonially and asked, “I have no question about the one hair, but what about the many holes?”

Dōgen chuckled and said: “Completely threaded!”

Denkōroku, Case 52, T82 2585:408c27–409a1

Another famous *kōan*, attributed to Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768), a Japanese reformer and revitalizer of the *Rinzai Zen* school, and included in his *Yabukōji*,

written in 1752, goes: “Two hands clap and make a sound. What is the sound of one hand clapping?” The ‘answer’ here is to understand that the “two hands” represent the *kōan* and the desire of the meditator as a separate being to understand it. When beginning meditation, the two appear to be separate; but after continued focus and repetition on the *kōan* for long periods of time, the identity of the practitioner becomes merged with the *kōan*. This is the sound of one hand. Duality is thus deemed to have been surmounted.

The intention behind such *kōans* is to confuse the intellectual, analytical mind of the student, “to throw him or her into the ravine of ‘great doubt,’”⁶ so that he ultimately relinquishes concepts and analytical thought as a means of understanding Reality, being left with a simple yearning to understand. The meaning of a *kōan* is not something to be trapped in words or intellectual fabrications. A *kōan*, when properly comprehended, is enlightenment and Reality itself. According to Keizan Jōkin (1268–1325), the co-founder (along with Dōgen Zenji) of *Sōtō Zen*:

When in the midst of not thinking you reveal the ultimate meaning, then your vision is none other than the *kōan* itself. When in the midst of not striving you achieve realization, then the *kōan* is none other than your own vision.

Keizan Jōkin, Warnings on Zen Practice, in ZAGY p.71

Harada Sogaku Rōshi (1871–1961) adds:

Although we speak of *kōans*, they are none other than Buddhism itself. We also say ‘true aspect’, ‘suchness’, ‘the original face’, ‘the true *Dharma*’, ‘the three treasures’, ‘the subtle law’, and so forth to refer to the same thing. In other words, the word *buddhadharma* is a *kōan*. In short, ‘the true reality of the universe’, ‘the treasury of the true *Dharma* eye,’ ‘the subtle mind of *nirvāṇa*’: these are all *kōans*.

Harada Sogaku Rōshi, Discourse on Recommending Zazen to All People, in ZAGY p.72

According to the *Zen* perspective, everything in existence contains the essential *buddha*-nature and is thus an expression of the absolute Reality that writer Kōun Yamada (1907–1989) calls the “Essential World”. This includes a *kōan* and a true understanding of it:

Everything in the phenomenal world is the total expression and realization of the Essential World.... Our true Self, which is empty and contains limitless capabilities,... is the Essential World. When we see this clearly, then each thing is the complete and perfect expression of our true Self and of the ultimate Truth of the universe. Sun,

moon, stars, every tree and blade of grass, and every action, large and subtle – there isn't one of these that is not a complete revelation of the scenery of the Essential World.

Kōun Yamada, *Zen, ZAGY* p.72

From this perspective, the words and external aspects of the *kōan* are only a part of the mundane world. It is inner realization of the essential Reality that is the true heart of a *kōan*.

Although *kōans* show considerable variety and are not readily amenable to classification, they have nonetheless been categorized in a number of ways. Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1768), who maintained that there are around 1,700 recognized *kōans* (3,000 if subdivisions are taken into account), was responsible for the original systematization of *kōan* usage in the *Rinzai* school, which – with further developments from his successors – remains prevalent today. Hakuin's reformist efforts included the introduction of various other meditation practices, such as breathing exercises, which were intended to correct the excessive use of *kōans* that had become prevalent in his day.

Hakuin's classification puts *kōans* into five categories, progress through which remains a standard part of *Rinzai* practice in present times. These are only rough 'classifications', however, and one *kōan* can fall into more than a single category. The five *Rinzai* categories are:

1. *Hōsshin kōan*. *Dharma-body* (S. *dharmakāya*) *kōan*; a *kōan* related to the concept of the *dharmakāya*, the all-pervading 'Reality body' of the Buddha, also called Suchness, *Dharma-nature*, Reality as it is, awakening, *nirvāṇa*, the true Self, and so on.⁷ A *hōsshin kōan* is intended to induce the beginnings of an understanding of one's innate *buddha-nature*, and the oneness of oneself and all existence – to glimpse something of the nature of Reality, to develop or deepen an initial insight into one's own nature (*kenshō*). Meditation on a *hōsshin kōan* is the first of Hakuin Ekaku's five stages. Examples of *hōsshin kōan* are the *mu kōan* ("Does a dog have a *buddha-nature*?"); "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"; and "Thinking of neither good nor evil, show me your original self."⁸ Other *hōsshin kōans* include answers to the question, "What is Buddha?" Among the replies are "Three pounds of flax,"⁹ "The very mind is Buddha," and "No mind, no Buddha."¹⁰ Having gained an initial glimpse into the nature of oneself and Reality, the teacher assigns further *kōans* to develop the insight.

2. *Kikan kōan*. *Lit.* device or action *kōan*. *Ki* means 'activity' or 'action' and *kan* means 'setting up a barrier' or 'closing a door'. Understanding something of the interpenetrating oneness of Reality does not mean that this can be automatically carried forward with compassion and wisdom into everyday, active life. Meditation needs to enhance one's ability to deal with mundane

human existence, and *kikan kōans* are intended to help the meditator integrate his spiritual insight with mundane events and phenomena, and to deepen his superficial understanding of the all-pervading Oneness. *Kikan kōans* relate to the manifestation of multiplicity in oneness, and help to cultivate an awareness of the multiplicity and distinctions of relative reality within an overall consciousness of Oneness. They help to train a practitioner to differentiate things (which is required in everyday life) within an understanding of the oneness of all things.

Examples of *kikan kōans* are: “A monk asked Zhàozhōu, ‘What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China?’ to which Zhàozhōu replied, ‘The oak tree in the garden.’”¹¹ Or, “A monk questioned Yúnmén (c.862–949), ‘What is the place from which all *buddhas* come?’ Yúnmén replied, ‘East mountain walks on water.’”¹²

The term *kikan* is also used in reference to all methods of ‘teaching through devices’. This includes methods other than *kōans*, notably a shout and/or a blow with a stick at an appropriate ‘psychological’ moment in the spiritual development of a student, or some form of seemingly bizarre behaviour.

3. *Gonsen kōan.* *Lit.* pondering words; a *kōan* that uses words to create clarification; a *kōan* with an obscure meaning that is used as a focus for meditation in order to encourage understanding of its deeper meaning, beyond its literal sense, and hence to develop a deeper, non-conceptual understanding of the nature of Reality; usually originating as a saying from one of the great *Zen* masters of the past. Some words and sayings can encourage the development of concepts; others such as *gonsen kōans* are uttered by masters to stop the mind in its conceptualizing tracks. There are a great many such *kōans*. Zhàozhōu’s response of, “Go and wash your bowl” is a good example, as also:

A monk asked Nánquán (c.749–835), “Is there any *dharma* that has not been preached to the people?”

Nansen answered, “There is.”

“What is the truth that has not been taught?” asked the monk.

Nansen said, “It is not mind; it is not Buddha; it is not things.”

Mumonkan, Case 27, TZC pp.91–92

Likewise, when Fuketsu (896–973) was asked how to express Reality without the use of the mind, he quoted a verse:

I always remember the spring in Kōnan –
where the partridge calls and the flowers are fragrant!

Mumonkan, Case 24; cf. TZC p.85

4. *Nantō kōan.* *Lit.* difficult to penetrate, difficult to pass; a *kōan* that is especially difficult to understand, designed to deepen understanding even

further. Such *kōans* include: “Goso said, ‘A water buffalo has passed by the window. His head, horns, and four legs have all gone past. But why can’t his tail pass too?’”¹³ However, though classified as difficult, the ease or difficulty with which a *kōan* is understood is in the mind of the student, not in the *kōan* itself.

Nantō kōans are intended to root out spiritual complacency. It is easy for a meditator to rest on his laurels, thinking that he has attained something. *Nantō kōans* are given to a student to highlight shortcomings and to provoke further progress. Hakuin Zenji mentions eight such *kōans*, although uncertainty prevails as to which eight he was referring to. Kōun Yamada cautions:

In discussing *kōans* that are difficult to pass, I must warn against getting too caught up in figuring out solutions to them and thereby straying from the true way of meditation, which is to ‘rest at peace in the Essential.’ Although we call these *kōans* ‘difficult’, they are no more than tools to deepen the experience of awakening and eventually eliminate all trace of that experience. However, if we overlook the basic requisite of awakening and devote our time to figuring out answers to these *kōans*, we will be scurrying here and there over the waves and eddies of the phenomenal world without taking even a step into the World of the Essential. Although we may have formally passed the eight difficult *kōans*, we are actually right where we started, not knowing the Essential World even in our dreams and unable to gain true peace of mind. The cases of this happening are not as few as one might think.

Kōun Yamada, Zen, ZAGY pp.83–84

5. *Goi kōan.* *Lit.* five-ranks *kōan*; five stages of endeavour and accomplishment; five degrees of enlightenment. According to the *Chán* master Dòngshān Liángjiè (J. Tōzan Ryōkan, 807–869), the realization of Reality passes through five stages, as summarized in a five-stanza poem used by the *Rinzai* school as its final category of *kōan*. The poem identifies five forms of relationship between relative and absolute Reality, according to the *Huáyán* (S. *Avatamsaka*) school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist philosophy. The purpose of a *goi kōan* is to test, confirm, and deepen the degree of enlightenment attained.

Kōans have been classified in other ways. Among these is that of the *Zen* master Shōichi, who divided *kōans* into three groups. The first category is *richi* (principle) *kōans*, which concern the essential Buddhist principles, such as *buddha*-nature, the *dharma*-body, and the Buddha – these correspond to the *hōsshin kōans* of Hakuin Ekaku. Such *kōans* have been classed as ‘teaching through principle’. Secondly, there are *kikan kōans*, which fall into the category of ‘teaching through devices (*kikan*)’. Thirdly, *kōjō* (directed upward)

kōans are the sayings of those enlightened masters who have continued their practice in order to reach an even purer degree of personal enlightenment, and whose sayings provide insight into the nature of Reality.

The *kōan* is also used in the Pure Land tradition. Recitation of the Pure Land *mantra*, ‘Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light (J. *Namu Amida Butsu*, C. *Nāmó Ēmítuófó*),’ also known as the *nembutsu*, is accompanied by the question, “Who is reciting the name of the Buddha?” The query is equivalent to the age-old question posed by human beings in search of the spiritual Truth: “Who am I?” or “What am I?”

The different schools and sub-schools have adopted different approaches to the use of *kōans*. In *Rinzai* (C. *Línjì*) schools, the *kōan* is used as a primary form of meditation, and it is necessary for a student to pass successfully through all the five stages, solving all the *kōans* and being able to comment upon them appropriately before he is given the seal of transmission (J. *inka shōmei*) by his master, authorizing him to teach others. Naturally, the routine and ritualized study of *kōans* for the purpose of becoming a teacher is somewhat different from the quest for enlightenment alone.

Although making use of *kōans*, with many *kōan* collections compiled by teachers of the *Sōtō* (C. *Cáodòng*) schools, *Sōtō* does not generally advocate the use of *kōans* as a form of meditation. *Sōtō* maintains that silent meditation (J. *mokushō, shikantaza*) or sitting meditation (*zazen*) is a more effective means of attaining a true enlightenment experience. Moreover, in the *Rinzai* school, a student is expected to exert himself to find a suitable verbal answer, while in the *Sōtō* school, an action or gesture can be a suitable response, or a master may himself provide the student with an answer upon which to ponder and meditate.

Even advocates of the *kōan* have observed that their use can degenerate into intellectual cleverness, repartee and wordplay, rather than a tool in the search for enlightenment. Crib sheets have been circulated among students for many centuries to aid their passage through the monastic curriculum. The wise student, however, realizes that mere verbal answers have no value. What is sought is non-verbal, non-conceptual understanding of Reality.

The intent of a *kōan* is therefore to exhaust a practitioner’s effort in trying to find an intellectual answer. Meditation on a *kōan* is an exercise in forgetfulness of self. It may even be necessary for the frustration of the practitioner to reach a climax, at which point he simply gives up, relinquishing his everyday logical thinking; then, suddenly, his mind is illumined, his clouded conventional thinking ceases, his ‘I’ is no more, and his entire being becomes one with the *kōan*. This is when his own true nature, his *buddha*-nature is said to be revealed. Then his innate, clear and intuitive mind takes over, dispelling delusion and duality, overcoming the limitations of logical thought in solving the question of ultimate Truth. As long as the ‘I’ is present, solving the *kōan* is not possible; when the ‘I’ evaporates, enlightenment dawns. But spiritual

evolution is gradual. Usually the master allows a student numerous attempts to find the answer to the *kōan*, a process that can last many years. In reality, only a fully realized master can understand the true import of a *kōan*.

See also: **kānhuà Chán.**

1. *Mumonkan*, Case 5, *TZC* pp.38–39.
2. *Hekiganroku*, Case 17; cf. *TZC* p.191.
3. *Mumonkan*, Case 37; cf. *TZC* p.110.
4. E.g. *Hekiganroku*, Cases 20, 73; cf. *TZC* pp.197–98, 336–37.
5. *Línjì yǔlù* (*Record of Línjì*), T47 1985:500b22–24; cf. *ZTML* p.52.
6. Kōun Yamada, *Zen*, *ZAGY* p.74.
7. Kōun Yamada, *Zen*, *ZAGY* p.77.
8. *Mumonkan*, Case 23.
9. *Hekiganroku*, Case 12, *TZC* p.179.
10. *Mumonkan*, Cases 30, 33, *TZC* pp.98, 104.
11. *Mumonkan*, Case 37.
12. *Shūmon Kattōshū*, Case 49, *EVZK* p.68.
13. *Mumonkan*, Case 38; cf. *TZC* p.112.

kriyā (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* action, activity, act, movement, deed, undertaking, performance, work; a duty, a pious act, a rite, a religious act, ceremony or observance such as *pitṛi-kriyā* (ancestor rituals) and *agni-kriyā* (fire ritual); a particular Hindu ceremony performed on the thirteenth day after a person's death; a literary work; a practice, such as the various practices of *yoga*.

See also: **kriyā yoga.**

kriyā tantra (S), **bya rgyud** (T) *Lit.* ritual (*kriyā*) *tantra*; a category of esoteric or tantric Buddhism that emphasizes the practice of rituals; the first of a common three-part classification of tantric practices used by the three 'new' schools (*Kagyü*, *Sakya*, and *Geluk*) of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries CE; the fourth of the nine-vehicle (*navayāna*) stages on the spiritual path according to the older *Nyingma* ('Old Translations') school, who trace their origins to the eighth-century teacher and translator of Sanskrit texts, Padmasambhava.

Kriyā tantras comprise the largest single group of tantric texts. Over 450 varied treatises are ascribed to this class by the Tibetan *Kanjur* collection of Buddhist texts. Most of them probably date from the second century CE, with many pre-dating the emergence of an identifiably Buddhist tantrism from the milieu of Indian *Mahāyāna* Buddhism and the various yogic and

tantric schools. *Tantra* is a retrospective designation for these texts, which rarely classify themselves as *tantras*; the names more commonly used are *sūtra* (sacred verses), *dhāraṇī* (magical verses), *kalpa* (rules for performing rituals), and *rājñī* (queen, princess). The goals of the practices described are mainly worldly (*laukika*), and include such aims as: protection from adversity and illness; surmounting enemies and other obstacles; invoking health and prosperity; control of the weather; propitiation of deities; and so on. The practices employed to attain these ends encompass: the ritual visualization of deities, including celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*; recitation of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*; the use of *mudrās* (hand gestures and postures, often symbolic); and early kinds of *maṇḍala*, ablutions, offerings, and so on. The deities include such well-known *Mahāyāna* characters as the celestial *bodhisattvas* Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, who figure prominently (for instance) in a well-known *Mahāyāna* text, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. The higher goals of enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of birth and death appear only occasionally in the *kriyā tantras*.¹

According to the Hevajra-piṇḍārthaṭīkā Tantra:

If one has little ability to meditate on the real, there is the *kriyā tantra*, which mostly teaches external conduct for those who openly delight in symbolic conduct.

Hevajra-piṇḍārthaṭīkā Tantra, TOH1180, in NSTI p.269

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra**, **charyā tantra**, **navayāna**.

1. See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, BTIT pp.153–55.

kriyā yoga (S/H) *Lit.* practice (*kriyā*) of *yoga*; action *yoga*, practical *yoga*, external *yoga*, preparatory *yoga*; a term appearing in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, where he says that the last three of the five *niyamas* (observances, disciplines), namely, *tapas* (self-discipline), *svādhyāya* (self-study) and *Īshvara-praṇidhāna* (surrender to God) together constitute the practice of *yoga* (*kriyā yoga*):

Self-discipline (*tapas*), self-study (*svādhyāya*)
and surrender to God (*Īshvara-praṇidhāna*)
constitute the (external) practice (*kriyā*) of *yoga*.

They are for the purpose of removing afflictions (*kleshas*),
and attaining *samādhi*.

Spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*), egotism (*asmitā*),
worldly attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dvesha*),
and clinging to life (*abhinivesha*) are the main afflictions (*kleshas*). . . .
Their waves are to be overcome by meditation (*dhyāna*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:1–3, 11

Commentators have interpreted Patañjali's terse use of the term in several ways. Some have taken *kriyā yoga* to mean the practice of *prāṇāyāma* (control of the *prāṇa*, meaning both the external breathing and the subtle life energy), as outlined by Patañjali. That is to say, *kriyā yoga* is a synonym for *aṣṭāṅga* or *rāja yoga*. Others have taken the term in the context of Patañjali's verse, understanding *kriyā* to mean the external, preliminary and preparatory aspects of *yoga*.¹

In recent times, *kriyā yoga* is well known as the name given to the *yoga* techniques taught by Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952) and later by the movement he started, known as the Self-Realization Fellowship, with its headquarters in California. According to Yogananda's descriptions of this practice, *kriyā yoga* is essentially the same as *prāṇāyāma* or *rāja yoga*, although the breathing exercises have been adapted for modern times:

When by *kriyā yoga* the mortal breath disappears scientifically from the lungs, the *yogī* consciously experiences, without dying, the death process by which energy is switched off from the senses (causing the disappearance of the body consciousness and the simultaneous appearance of the soul consciousness). Unlike the ordinary man, the *yogī* realizes that his life is not conditioned by exhalation and inhalation, but that the steady life force in the brain is continuously reinforced through the medulla from the omnipresent cosmic current. . . . When the breath ceases in *kriyā yoga*, he is suffused with an incomparable bliss. . . .

In the first stages of ecstasy of *kriyā yoga*, the *yogī* perceives the soul's blessedness. By higher ecstasies that come as a result of complete mastery of the breathless state, he realizes the physical body to be made of lifetrans (*prāṇa*) that are surrounded by a 'halo' of grosser . . . cells. The *yogī* perceives the illusion of the body-dream dematerialize into the reality of God. By experiencing the reality of the body as *prāṇa* or lifetrans, controlled by the thought of God, the *yogī* becomes one with Him.

Paramahansa Yogananda, God Talks with Arjuna, GTBG pp.505–6

Yogananda also says that *kriyā yoga* is the direct highway, the shortest route, to divine realization, teaching human beings to ascend heavenward by leading the mind and life force up through the same spinal channel (*sushumṇā nāḍī*) that was used when the soul originally descended into the body.²

Yogananda received initiation from his *guru*, Sri Yukteswar Giri, who in turn was initiated by the householder Lahiri Mahasaya, who received initiation in 1861 from an *avatāra* (incarnation of a deity, an evolved soul) known simply as Baba Ji. It is said that Baba Ji gave Lahiri Mahasaya permission to lift the veil of secrecy that had previously surrounded the practice of *kriyā yoga*, and to teach it openly. Despite having several thousand disciples, Lahiri Mahasaya did not permit the development of any formal organization to promote his teachings. Initially, the spread of *kriyā yoga* in the West was

the work of Paramahansa Yogananda, following the instructions of his *guru*, Sri Yukteswar.

In India, Sri Yukteswar founded the Karar Ashram in 1903. Paramahansa Hariharananda (1907–2002), a fellow disciple of Yogananda, was head of this ashram from 1971, also founding various international *kriyā yoga* organizations and accepting disciples worldwide. At the present time, Paramahansa Hariharananda's successor, Paramahansa Prajnanananda travels the world as a teacher, also directing activities and development of the international centres started by his *guru*.

Since the time of Lahiri Mahasaya, a number of groups and *gurus* have adopted the name *kriyā yoga*, the basis of these being a blend of yogic postures (*āsanas*), *prāṇāyāma*, meditation of various kinds, and devotional practices such as chanting. The origin of these groups and techniques is generally attributed to *siddhas* (perfected yogis) of the past, adapted for modern times, most tracing their origins to the *avatāra* known as Baba Ji.

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**.

1. E.g. I.K. Taimni, *Science of Yoga*, SYYP pp.129–30, 155–56, 225.
2. Paramahansa Yogananda, *God Talks with Arjuna*, GTBG p.654.

kumbhak(a) (S/H) *Lit.* pot-like, though the etymology is uncertain; retention of the breath; a part of the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. See **prāṇāyāma**.

kuṇḍalinī yoga (S/H) The practice of awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* ('coiled up') and allowing the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy) to rise up the *sushumṇā*, which is the central subtle pranic channel (*nāḍī*) within the spinal cord. The practice is sometimes called *udghāṭana* (opening, as in an opening ceremony). The *kuṇḍalinī* is the latent or potential energy of the life force or *prāṇa*. Metaphorically, *kuṇḍalinī* is often described as a serpent goddess lying asleep in the *mūlādhāra* (rectal) *chakra*, guarding the entrance or mouth of the *sushumṇā*. *Kuṇḍalinī yoga* is effectively the same as *laya yoga*.

The practitioner who 'awakens' the 'sleeping goddess' enters the subtle physical, psychic realm, and attains miraculous powers. As the pranic energy rises, the attention is withdrawn from the body, and the *chakras*, by turn, are awakened and become ultra-dynamic. The practitioner may then attain *samādhi* (absorption) in the 'sky' of the body, the *chidākāsha*, which is the source of the *prāṇas* that function in the body. Taking the help of the light within, some practitioners may be able to pierce through the *chidākāsha* and enter the astral region, where they can reach the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus.

For a variety of reasons, *kuṇḍalinī yoga* is often described as dangerous to practise in modern times. Mostly, it is due to the impurity of body and mind

that characterize the majority of people nowadays, the impatience with which modern people wish to see progress, inducing them to try and cut corners in the purificatory practices, and the difficulty of finding a suitably experienced *guru*. If the *prāṇa* starts to rise before the body and mind are sufficiently pure, blockages to the awakened energy occur, which can cause physical, psychic, and mental damage. Negative passions, such as lust and anger, may also receive an influx of energy and become out of control.

A number of yogic and tantric texts describe processes by which the *kuṇḍalinī* may be awakened. In these descriptions, the *brahmadvāra* (the door of *Brahma*) is the ‘hollow centre’ within the *sushumṇā* or simply the *sushumṇā* itself. The *Shiva Saṃhitā* says:

Now I shall tell you the best way of being successful in *yoga*. Practitioners should keep it secret. It is the most inaccessible *yoga*.

When the sleeping goddess *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened through the grace of the *guru*, then all the lotuses (*chakras*) and bonds are readily pierced through and through.

Therefore, in order that the goddess, who is asleep in the mouth of the *brahmadvāra*, be awakened, the *mudrās* (exercises) should be practised with the greatest care.

Shiva Saṃhitā 4:12–14; cf. *SSV* p.43

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* is certain that the *kuṇḍalinī* is the key to liberation from birth and death:

Just as a door is opened with a key, similarly the *yogī* opens the door to liberation with *kuṇḍalinī*. . . . This *śakti* (power) is the means of liberation for the *yogī* and bondage for the ignorant. One who knows this is the knower of *yoga*. . . . *Kuṇḍalinī* is said to be coiled like a snake. Without a doubt, one who makes that *śakti* flow obtains liberation.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:105, 107–8; cf. *HYPM* pp.418–19, 422

Later on in this text, however, the writer explains that awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* ultimately results in contact with the *anāhat Nāda* (unstruck Sound), which is what actually destroys all *karma* and confers liberation.¹ Speaking of the mythological thousand-headed serpent *Shesha Nāga*, considered to support and sustain the world, the same writer continues:

Just as the serpent (*Shesha Nāga*) supports the earth and all its mountains and woods, so is *kuṇḍalinī* the support of all *yoga* practices.

Indeed, by the *guru*’s grace this sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, then all the lotuses (*chakras*) and knots (*granthis*) are opened.

Then, indeed, *sushumṇā* becomes the pathway of *prāṇa*; mind is freed of all attachments, and death is averted. . . .

Therefore, the goddess sleeping at the entrance of the *brahmadvāra* should be constantly aroused with all effort by performing *mudrā* thoroughly.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:1–3, 5; cf. *HYPM* pp.279–80, 283, 286

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* describes a practice by which the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, calling it the *shakti-chālana* (arousing the energy):

The great goddess *kuṇḍalinī*, the energy of the self, *ātmashakti* (soul energy), sleeps in the *mūlādhāra* (*chakra*); she has the form of a serpent having three and a half coils.

So long as she is asleep in the body, the *jīva* (incarnate soul) is a mere animal, and true knowledge does not arise, though he may practise ten millions of *yoga* (practices).

As a door is opened by a key, so is the *brahmadvāra* unlocked by awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* with *haṭha yoga*.

Encircling the loins with a piece of cloth, seated in a secluded room, not naked in an outer room, let him practise *shakti-chālana*.

One cubit long, and four fingers (three inches) wide, should be the encircling cloth – soft, white, and of fine texture. Join this cloth with the *kaṭi-sūtra* (a string worn round the loins).

Rub the body with ashes, sit in *siddhāsana*, drawing the *vāyu* (*prāṇa*) with the nostrils, forcibly join it with the *apāna*. Contract the rectum slowly by the *ashvinī-mudrā*, for as long as the *vāyu* does not enter the *sushumṇā* and manifest its presence.

Restraining the breath by *kumbhaka* in this manner, the serpent *kuṇḍalinī*, feeling suffocated, awakes and rises upwards.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:49–56; cf. *GSV* pp.27–28

In this context, *vāyu* is the *prāṇa* associated with the *tattva* of air, having its organizational focus in the heart *chakra*. Similarly, *apāna* is the *prāṇa* of the *mūlādhāra* or rectal *chakra*, associated with the earth *tattva*. *Kumbhaka* (retention) is part of the breath control exercises of *prāṇāyāma*. Essentially, the practices always involve *āsanas* (postures), *mudrās* (muscle contractions and movements), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), and concentration of the attention at the appropriate *chakra*.

Other writings give more or less detail of these practices, which are not necessarily the same from text to text. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* speaks of squeezing the “bulb (*kanda*)” on which the *kuṇḍalinī* lies sleeping:

Breathing in through the right nostril (*pingalā*) the serpent (*shakti*) should be seized by means of *kumbhaka*, and rotated constantly for an hour and a half, morning and evening.

There is a bulb (*kanda*) situated above the anus, one hand span high and four fingers breadth wide, soft and white as if enveloped in cloth.

Firmly seated in *vajrāsana*, holding the feet with the hands, squeeze the *kanda* with the ankle joint.

In the position of *vajrāsana*, the *yogī* should move the *kuṇḍalinī*. Having done *bhastrika* (bellows) *prāṇāyāma*, the *kuṇḍalinī* is soon aroused.

Move the *kuṇḍalinī* by contracting the sun (fire energy) in the *maṇipūra* (*chakra*). Even if such a person should be on the verge of death, where is the need to fear death?

By moving the *kuṇḍalinī* fearlessly for an hour and a half, it is drawn into the *sushumṇā* and rises a little.

In this way, it is easy for *kuṇḍalinī* to enter the opening of *sushumṇā*. Thus the *prāṇa* proceeds through *sushumṇā* of its own accord.

In that way the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* should be regularly moved. By her regular movement, the *yogī* is freed from disease.

The *yogī* who moves the *śakti* regularly, enjoys success (*siddhi*). He easily conquers *kāla* (time, death). What more is there to say?

One who enjoys being *brahmacharya* (celibate), and always takes moderate diet and practises arousal of *kuṇḍalinī*, achieves perfection in forty days. . . .

What other methods are there to cleanse the 72,000 *nāḍīs* of dirt besides the practice of arousing *kuṇḍalinī*?

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:112–21, 123;

cf. *HYPM* pp.428, 430–33, 435, 438–39, 441, 443, 446

Indian *sants*, who have taught the path of the *Shabd* (Word), have expressed the opinion that the practice of awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* is detrimental to higher spiritual progress since it entails sending the attention of the mind and soul down into the body. The real spiritual journey, they say, begins with the collection of all the attention at the eye centre (*ājñā chakra*), from whence the mind and soul can leave the body, and go into higher spiritual realms. Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh explains:

Near the sacral plexus and associated with the function of reproduction is the *nāḍī*, the royal vein called *kuṇḍalinī*, which lies coiled like a serpent. This is the root of all the *nāḍīs*. From it twenty four smaller *nāḍīs* spring forth, which support the body. Out of these, ten carry the *prāṇas* to different parts of the body. Among these, *idā*, *pingalā* and *sushumṇā* are the major *nāḍīs*, which control the breath (*prāṇa*). They reach only as far as the *Shiv netra*, the *tīsrā til*, near the eyes. The progress of those who follow *prāṇāyāma*, stops at *tīsrā til* (third eye), where these *nāḍīs* end and the *prāṇas* emerge in *chidākāśh*, the

place of their origin. No power can carry one further than its origin.
From here, some realize their limitation and take the help of the three
canals or streams of the *guṇas* and manage to reach *sahans dal kanwal*.

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul, Discourses 3, SOSJ pp.31–32

The “three canals or streams of the *guṇas*” are the higher counterpart of *iḍā*, *pingalā* and *sushumṇā* in the realms above the eyes.

See also: **chetana ākāsha** (5.1), **kuṇḍalinī** (5.1), **prāṇāyāma**.

1. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:80ff., *HYPM* p.577ff.

kyūdō (J) *Lit.* way (*dō*) of the bow (*kyū*); a modern term for the Japanese martial art of archery; originating from *kyūjutsu* (art of the bow), a style of archery that became prevalent among the *samurai* (warrior) class of feudal Japan during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Archery in Japan, as elsewhere in the world, has its origins in pre-history and has developed through various styles. A regular *kyūdō* practitioner is known as a *kyūdōjin* and an expert is a *kyūdōka*.

The Japanese *dō* is a phonetic rendering of the Chinese *dào* (way), and is included in the name of several arts and disciplines. These include *kyūdō*, *kendō* (way of the sword), *karate-dō* (way of the empty fist), *chadō* (way of tea, the tea ceremony), *shōdō* (way of writing, calligraphy), and so on. *Dō* on its own is commonly used in a Buddhist context, where it translates *buddhadharma* (the Way of the Buddha, *i.e.* Buddhism).

According to archaeological findings, Japanese archery dates as far back as 5,000 BCE, with the first images depicting the distinctive asymmetric Japanese longbow appearing during the *Yayoi* period (c.300 BCE – 300 CE). Over time, a number of schools and lineages of archery have come into being, with famous archers being celebrated as national heroes.¹ With the advent of firearms, introduced by the Portuguese in 1543, the use of the bow fell into decline, and nowadays *kyūdō* is a competitive and leisure sport, and is also used in ceremonies.

Although discipline, correct breathing, posture, concentration, perseverance and so on are common elements of both *Zen* and archery (and most other sports), the association of archery with *Zen* Buddhism, at least in the West, seems to have originated with a lecture delivered in 1936 by Eugen Herrigel (1884–1955), professor of philosophy, to the German-Japanese Society in Berlin. This lecture, which subsequently appeared in the magazine *Nippon* under the title “The Chivalrous Art of Archery”, received considerable interest and was translated into various languages, including Japanese. Twelve years later, Professor Herrigel’s *Zen in the Art of Archery* was published, which rapidly became an international bestseller, first published in English in 1953.

The basic theme of his book, though interesting as a personal account of his experiences with his unorthodox master Awa Kenzō (1880–1939), is not supported by any earlier historical association of archery with *Zen* Buddhism. Interestingly, the term used by Herrigel is *kyūjutsu*; *kyūdō* is a term that has come to epitomize the association of *kyūjutsu* with *Zen*.² Awa, reputed to have attained one hundred percent accuracy as an archer, taught archery with something of a spiritual or mystical perspective. In 1927, despite significant opposition from his students, he formally established his method as a religious organization that he called *Daishadōkyō* (‘Great Doctrine of the Way of Shooting’). Shōji Yamada writes:

Awa’s students ... later testified that *Daishadōkyō* consisted of “archery as a religion”, that “the founder (of this religion) is Master Awa Kenzō,” and that “the master described his rounds of travel to provide guidance in various regions, not as (archery) lessons or as instruction; he said that he was doing ‘missionary work’.”³ Thus, it is clear that Awa’s *Daishadōkyō* possessed religious characteristics.

Shōji Yamada, Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery, MZAA p.11

Awa fell ill a year after founding *Daishadōkyō* with a condition that – though not entirely incapacitating – persisted until his death in 1939. The *Daishadōkyō* organization died with him, but there remain many, especially in the West, who still practise *kyūdō* according to Awa’s teaching, largely as a result of Herrigel’s book. Whether Awa was unique in his teaching of archery within a *Zen*-like context is uncertain, because it is claimed that there were other Japanese teachers at the time who adopted a similar approach to various disciplines, not only to archery.⁴

Professor Herrigel taught philosophy in Japan from 1924 to 1929, but his initial motivation in going to Japan was his interest in *Zen*. Even as a student he had been fascinated by mysticism and felt that the most mystical of all religions was *Zen*. After three years in Japan, he observed:

It has been three years since I came to Japan. I have finally realized that there are many things in Japanese culture that should be studied. In particular, it appears to me that Buddhism, *Zen* most especially, has exerted a very strong influence on Japanese thought. I think that the most expedient way for me to get to know *Zen* is to study *kyūdō*.

Komachiya Sōzō, Herigeru-kun to yumi, HYKS pp.69–70, in MZAA p.15

Awa, for his part, though possessing no formal training in *Zen*, used *Zen* and Buddhist concepts and terminology in his teaching of archery, but was not a practitioner of *Zen* meditation. He spoke little English, however, and Herrigel was far from fluent in Japanese (his weekly meeting with Awa were conducted through an interpreter), so the notions picked up by Herrigel concerning

Awa's teaching are likely to have been significantly coloured by Herrigel's interest in *Zen*. Whatever the truth of the matter, the *kyūdō* of modern times is largely founded upon Herrigel's portrayal of the time he spent with Awa Kenzō, as described in his *Zen in the Art of Archery*.

An essential aspect of Awa's teaching was the loss of ego, to become one with the arrow, the shooting, and the target:

The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's eye which confronts him. This state of unconscious is realized only when, completely empty and rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill, though there is in it something of a quite different order which cannot be attained by any progressive study of the art. . . .

Should one ask, from this standpoint, how the Japanese masters understand this contest of the archer with himself, and how they describe it, their answer would sound enigmatic in the extreme. For them the contest consists in the archer aiming at himself and yet not at himself, in hitting himself and yet not himself, and thus becoming simultaneously the aimer and the aim, the hitter and the hit. Or, to use some expressions which are nearest the heart of the masters, it is necessary for the archer to become, in spite of himself, an unmoved centre. Then comes the supreme and ultimate miracle: art becomes 'artless', shooting becomes not-shooting, a shooting without bow and arrow; the teacher becomes a pupil again, the master a beginner, the end a beginning, and the beginning perfection.

Eugen Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, ZAAH pp.6, 16

This understanding is exemplified by some of the teaching Herrigel received from his master. When he was having difficulty releasing his grip on the arrow at the right moment, Master Awa explained:

"The right art," cried the master, "is purposeless, aimless! The more obstinately you try to learn how to shoot the arrow for the sake of hitting the goal, the less you will succeed in the one and the further the other will recede. What stands in your way is that you have a much too wilful will. You think that what you do not do yourself does not happen."

Eugen Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, ZAAH pp.46–47

In another exchange, Master Awa explains how hitting the target is not simply the result of technical training, but outward proof that the archer has reached that highest state of self-abandonment and egolessness. He taught that the archer should not even aim at the target, something that Herrigel found impossible to understand:

“I think I understand what you mean by the real, inner goal which ought to be hit. But how it happens that the outer goal, the disc of paper, is hit without the archer’s taking aim, and that the hits are only outward confirmations of inner events – that correspondence is beyond me.”

“You are under an illusion,” said the master after a while, “if you imagine that even a rough understanding of these dark connections would help you. These are processes which are beyond the reach of understanding. Do not forget that even in nature there are correspondences which cannot be understood, and yet are so real that we have grown accustomed to them, just as if they could not be any different.

I will give you an example which I have often puzzled over. The spider dances her web without knowing that there are flies that will get caught in it. The fly, dancing nonchalantly on a sunbeam, gets caught in the net without knowing what lies in store. But through both of them ‘It’ dances, and inside and outside are united in this dance. So, too, the archer hits the target without having aimed – more I cannot say.”

Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, ZAAH pp.79–80

1. Yamada Shōji, “The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery,” *MZAA* pp.4–5.
2. Yamada Shōji, “The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery,” *MZAA* p.3.
3. Yasunosuke Sakurai, *Awa Kenzō*, *AKYS* pp.210–11.
4. *Zen in the Art of Archery – A Practitioner’s View*, *ZAAP*.

laya yoga (S/H) *Lit. yoga of meditative absorption (laya)*. *Laya* also means dissolution, melting, disappearance, extinction and cessation, which in the context of this term refers to cessation or suspension of mental activity.

Laya yoga is a form of *yoga* in which the practitioner controls the waves or fluctuations of the mind (*chitta-vṛttis*) by guiding the *prāṇa* or subtle life energy of the *kuṇḍalinī* up the *sushumṇā* (central spinal channel of *prāṇa*) and through the various *chakras* (centres), culminating in *samādhi* (deep absorption) either in the *chidākāsha* (the ‘sky’ of consciousness, behind and above the eyes) or, after passing through the *brahmarandhra* in the crown of the head, in the *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’), also called *sahasrāra kamala* (thousand-petalled lotus).

The *sushumṇā* is the central *nāḍī* (channel of subtle pranic energy) that lies within the spine. As the attention of the yogi rises, focused upon the *kuṇḍalinī*, there is a suspension of activity or ‘dissolution (*laya*)’ at each of the *chakras*. *Laya yoga* is effectively the same as *kuṇḍalinī yoga*.

Prāṇa is the subtle life energy that underlies the functioning of the material body. The *kuṇḍalinī* is the latent energy inherent in the *prāṇa*, which is awakened or brought into consciousness by the practice of *haṭha yoga*, *laya*

yoga, and *prāṇāyāma*. The six *chakras* of the body are organizational centres of subtle pranic energy, each of the five *chakras* below the eyes being associated with one of the five *tattvas*, the subtle elements or conditions of matter.

Metaphorically, *kuṇḍalinī* (coiled up) is often described as a serpent goddess lying asleep in the *mūlādhāra* (rectal) *chakra*, guarding the entrance or mouth of the *sushumṇā*.

Mind and body, through which the sensory world is experienced, are obstacles to realization of the state of pure consciousness (*chit*). *Yoga* seeks to control and still the *chitta-vṛttis* with the help of *prāṇa*. When the mind is completely stilled, then the primordial Power or pure Consciousness (*Chit*) is experienced. According to the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, this ecstatic state (*samādhi*) – in which the identity of the mind merges into the supreme Self (*Ātman*), “like salt dissolved in water becomes one with it” – is achieved after the cessation or ‘dissolution (*laya*)’ of all activity of *prāṇa* and mind (*manas*).¹

All forms of *yoga* ultimately seek the same goal, and in practice the names given to the various forms are somewhat loosely applied. Speaking of this final goal, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* says:

Rāja yoga, *samādhi* (absorption), *unmanī* (transcendent mind), *manonmanī* (super-transcendent mind), *amaratva* (immortality), *laya* (absorption), *Tattva* (Truth), *shūnya-ashūnya* (void-nonvoid), *paramapada* (supreme state), *amanaska* (without mind), *advaita* (non-dual), *nirālamba* (self-sufficient), *nirañjana* (spotless), *jīvanmukti* (liberation while living), *sahaja* (tranquillity), and *turīya* (lit. fourth; transcendence) are all synonymous terms.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:3–4, HYPM p.472

Yoga is traditionally said to have four forms – *haṭha yoga*, *mantra yoga*, *laya yoga*, and *rāja yoga* – all of them encompassed within Patañjali’s *yoga* system, which became known as *aṣṭāṅga yoga* (eightfold *yoga*) or *rāja yoga* (king of *yogas*).

Haṭha yoga seeks to control the mind chiefly through physical postures, exercises and cleansing practices, along with *prāṇāyāma*. These help to purify the *nāḍīs* and the subtle aspects of the material body.

Mantra yoga consists largely of the repetition (*japa*) of *mantras*, together with the contemplation of *maṇḍalas* and various other forms, physical or imagined, such as the idols and other representations of deities.

Laya yoga is regarded as the higher aspect of *haṭha yoga*. While *haṭha yoga* concerns itself especially, although not exclusively, with the physical body, seeking to affect the subtle body through the gross body, *laya yoga* deals more especially with the *chakras*.

When the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, its pranic energy enters the *sushumṇā* through an opening in the *mūlādhāra chakra* known as the *brahmadvāra* (door of *Brahma*). Within the *sushumṇā* there is a subtle *nāḍī* known as the *vajra*

nāḍī or *vajrolī*, and within that is a yet more subtle *nāḍī*, the *chitra nāḍī* or *chitrinī*, “as subtle as a spider’s thread”.² It is upon this that the six *chakras* are threaded. Within the *chitra nāḍī* lies the *brahmanāḍī*, through which the *kuṇḍalinī* rises up to the *brahmarandhra* and leaves the body.

The *chakras* are also known as lotuses, each having a particular number of petals. The petals are formed by the interplay of the *nāḍīs*, and reflect the specific energy aspects of each *chakra*. On each petal, there is a ‘letter’, each ‘letter’ being a manifestation of a more inward or subtle *śabda* (sound) or *śakti* (energy). These ‘letters’ are also aspects of the *kuṇḍalinī*. From the subtle sounds or vibrations of these ‘letters’, yogis are said to have discovered various *bīja-mantras* (seed *mantras*, monosyllabic sounds having no particular meaning), which are intended to resonate with the energy of each *chakra* when repeated with the attention held at that centre. Repetition (*japa*) of these *mantras* awakens the *prāṇa* at that centre, permitting the *kuṇḍalinī* to pass through unimpeded. Together, the letters are considered to constitute what is called the *mantra* body of the *kuṇḍalinī*. The fifty letters on the fifty petals of the six *chakras* are also traditionally believed to be the origin of the fifty letters or sounds (phonemes) of the Sanskrit alphabet.³

Either side of the *sushumṇā* run two other main spinal *nāḍīs* – *idā* and *pingalā*. Running throughout the worlds of the higher mind (physical, astral, and causal), finally appearing in the gross material body, these three *nāḍīs* arise at the level of the universal mind as aspects of the three *guṇas* of *sattva* (harmony, balance), *tamas* (inertia, darkness), and *rajas* (activity). The key to attaining *samādhi* is to guide the *prāṇa* out of *idā* and *pingalā* and into the *sushumṇā*. These two *nāḍīs* then become quiescent.⁴ This is effected by means of *haṭha yoga* practices, and repetition of appropriate *mantras* with the attention concentrated at each *chakra*, successively. By these means, the *kuṇḍalinī* gradually rises.

As the *kuṇḍalinī* pierces each lotus, the face of the lotus, which was previously turned downwards, now turns upwards. As the *kuṇḍalinī* rises above each *chakra*, function is withdrawn from that centre, and it becomes quiescent. At the same time, the *tattva* associated with that centre, along with its associated sense organs, enters a state of *laya* (cessation of activity). The *tattva* is absorbed into the rising energy of the *kuṇḍalinī*, and is replaced by the more subtle energy from which the *tattvic* energy comes into being.

In general terms, during the ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī*, the lower energy is absorbed into its higher cause, which lies immediately above. Through concentration, the yogi is able to guide the pranic energy upwards through the *chakras*. As the energy passes through these centres, each is activated and the practitioner experiences colours and sounds unknown to the physical senses. He also acquires heightened consciousness, perception, and powers. Control of *prāṇa* in the *sushumṇā* leads to control and steadiness of the mind, for “*prāṇa* is the master of the mind.” Piercing the last of the six *chakras*, the *ājñā chakra* between the

eyebrows, he rises above the *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner instrument, the human mind). The mind and *prāṇa* then enter into a state of *laya* – their activity is suspended. Here, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* uses the term *maruta* (wind) for *prāṇa*:

When *prāṇa* (*maruta*) courses through the middle (*i.e.* the *sushumṇā*), the mind becomes still. This stillness of the mind (*manas*) is the state of *manonmanī* (cessation of mental functioning)... .

Mind (*manas*) is the master of the senses (*indriyas*), and *prāṇa* (*maruta*) is master of the mind (*manas*). *Prāṇa* (*maruta*) is subordinate to *laya*, and *laya* is founded on the *Nāda* (Sound)... . When *prāṇa* and mind are in *laya*, indescribable ecstasy is experienced.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:42, 4:29–30; cf. *HYPM* pp.231, 510

Following the *kuṇḍalinī*, and with the help of the inner *Nāda* (Sound) that has by this time become audible, the yogi then reaches the thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasrāra*). Here he enjoys the bliss of union with *Shiva*, identified with *Purusha* or *Brahman*, which is regarded in this form of *yoga* as the supreme Source. This is *samādhi*, the state of transcendental consciousness.

At the end of a period of meditation, the *kuṇḍalinī* returns to the *mūlādhāra chakra*. On its downward journey through the lotuses, each receives back its specific powers and functions, but purified. The ascent is described as *laya-krama* (process of absorption), causing all things in the *chakras* to pass into a state of *laya*. The return is *śṛishti-krama* (process of creation), as the *kuṇḍalinī* ‘recreates’ them, makes them manifest once again, or permits their activity to recommence. The soul (*jīvātman*) has then returned to the phenomenal world of separateness and multiplicity. But the yogi has now experienced the spiritual state, and knows the path to it.

Laya yoga is thus the yogi’s rise through the bodily *chakras*, together with the successive absorption or stilling of the activity of the *tattvas*, the *prāṇa* and the mind, until the goal is reached. In accordance with the system of Patañjali, its emphasis is on *dhāraṇā* (concentration), developing into *dhyāna* (contemplation), leading eventually to *samādhi*. The practices of *haṭha yoga* are preparatory or preliminary to this process, and all aspects of *ashtāṅga yoga* are an integral part of it.

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga, chakra** (5.1), **haṭha yoga, idā** (5.1), **kuṇḍalinī yoga, prāṇa** (5.1), **sushumṇā** (4.1).

1. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:5–7; cf. *HYPM* p.473.
2. Swami Purnananda, *Shaṭ-chakra-nirūpaṇa* 2, in *SPSP* p.327.
3. Some scholars, by counting diphthongs as separate letters, have arrived at totals from fifty to fifty-four, although most of the ancient Sanskrit texts have settled on fifty.
4. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 3:12, 27–28, *HYPM* pp.291, 304.

liàndān (C) *Lit.* to refine (*liàn*) the elixir (*dān*); to concoct pills of immortality; to refine or cultivate the elixir, to refine one's inherent spiritual awareness; in Daoism, especially in *nèidān* (inner alchemy), a metaphor for spiritual practice, of which (for most schools) the first step is to control and refine the mind.

A seventeenth-century text, *A Genuine Guide to Cultivation of Nature and Life*, explains that *liàndān* refers to the refining of spiritual awareness:

The sun is heaven's brightness; if you put black in it and shake it up, the sun cannot shine. The mind is people's brightness; when day-to-day matters cloud it, the mind cannot shine. Therefore, that which is called 'refining the elixir (*liàndān*)' removes the dirty things in order to restore the mind's original substance and the spontaneity of its celestially mandated nature (*xìng*).

Yīn Zhēnrén gāodì, Xīngmìng guīzhǐ, JHL67; cf. XGB (I:27) p.155

See also: **xiūdào**.

liànjǐ (C) *Lit.* to refine (*liàn*) the self (*jǐ*); self-refinement, inner purification; sometimes translated as self-realization; especially in the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition of Daoism, the first and most essential step in spiritual practice; commonly mentioned in conjunction with *zhùjī* (laying the foundation) as the foundation of spiritual life; primarily involves control of the mind (*chíxīn*).

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) discusses the essential aspects of *liànjǐ*:

The path of cultivating the elixir (*xiūdān*) is nothing more than first refining ourselves (*liànjǐ*). The key to self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is first to contemplate our inherent nature (*tiānxìng*). If our inherent nature is not veiled, the five thieves (*wǔzéi*, five negative emotions) cannot mislead us. . . .

To refine oneself (*liànjǐ*), it is necessary to refine oneself until not the slightest trace of negative energy remains, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) have merged and transformed, the residues have been eliminated, and the gold is pure. . . .

In self-refinement (*liànjǐ*), one cannot have instant success. It is necessary to accept (the presence of) desires, gradually channelling them in the right direction. For ages has the opening (*qiào*) of true consciousness in human beings been tightly shut. Accumulated habits are deep-rooted, and the five thieves (*wǔzéi*) have been causing chaos for ages, making them really difficult to eliminate. . . .

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) and controlling the mind mean refining away the conceptual knowledge (*língzhī*) of the human mind (*rénxīn*), causing that which is floating to sink.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhī, ZW253, DS17

Going into greater detail, master Liú Yīmíng lists the different aspects of *liànjǐ* and *zhùjī*, before expressing his view that *zhùjī* (laying the foundation) and *liànjǐ* (refining the self) are ultimately a part of one process. In this context, desire (*yù*) will include lust:

Let me try to illustrate the essentials of refining oneself (*liànjǐ*) and of laying the foundation (*zhùjī*). Terminating anger (*fèn*) and ceasing desire (*yù*)... Turning one's mind into ashes and one's self-will (*yì*) into ice... Forgetting emotions and terminating thoughts... Being moderate in wealth and steadfast in poverty... Not coveting fame and fortune (*mínglì*) and not longing for sounds and colours... Decreasing the self to give profit to others and emptying one's mind to provide benefit... Practising only good and not committing any evil... Being unrelenting in one's will and bold in one's progress... Maintaining the stability of one's mind and being without duplicity until death... (all these are) refining oneself (*liànjǐ*)...

Casting away one's own person and seeing the self and objects as empty... Taking heaven and earth as one's sanctuary and the ten thousand things in one's body (seeing the macrocosm in the microcosm)... Not being dishonest in darkness or deceitful in secret... Being fearless before a tiger and unyielding before a warrior... Being unconcerned by life or death and undistraught by disease or sickness... – (all these are) laying the foundation (*zhùjī*).

Laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) and refining oneself (*liànjǐ*) are not separate from one another. If you are able to refine yourself, you can lay the foundations; if you are able to lay the foundations, you can refine yourself. When you return to the 'real place', laying the foundation and refining yourself become one thing. If you are able to lay the foundations for refining yourself, when the time comes in your practice you can manifest the restored elixir (*huándān*) and cultivate the great elixir (*dàdān*).

Alas! In order to lay the foundations (*zhùjī*), one must use the bellows (*i.e.* great effort); and in order to refine oneself (*liànjǐ*), one needs lead and mercury (true *yáng* and true *yīn*). How can laying the foundation for refining oneself be something easy?

Liú Yīmíng, Xiūzhēn hòubiàn, ZW261, DS7; cf. CTP pp.145–46

Only when a practitioner makes a patient and relaxed effort, and recognizes the presence of the inherent or true mind, so that it can be used as a touchstone, does it become easier:

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) and laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) is not an exercise of forced control, contrived effort, austere labour, or hard work. It is necessary to realize the inherently good and true mind (*tiānliáng*)

zhēnxīn), and to refine the self by means of this true mind. Then a drop of the *yáng* light (*yángguāng*), also known as true consciousness (*zhēnlíng*), shines forth within the darkness (*hēiàn*). Once this true consciousness is revealed, right and wrong, true and false all become unmistakably clear. You are no longer attached to things and desires, nor bound by worldly *karma* (*yuán*, causes). Then self-refinement becomes quite easy.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

Master Liú Yīmíng further explains that one cannot reasonably expect to have immediate success in refining the spirit to its original state (the ‘restored elixir’). It is necessary to follow the right process, as taught by a *míngshī* (enlightened master)¹ or *zhēnshī* (true teacher).² One’s ‘true self’ and one’s ‘true nature’ are essentially the same. ‘Refine your self’ and ‘refine your (original) nature’ are thus synonymous. Liú Yīmíng explains that in order to restore one’s true spiritual awareness – the ‘elixir’ of the inner alchemical process – it is first necessary to overcome the wayward human mind (*rénxīn*), which has acquired consciousness, cognition, feelings, and desires:

The classic *Spring Pervading the Garden*³ says, “To finally restore the elixir (*huándān*), people must first refine the self (*liànjǐ*), which takes time.” The exercise of self-refinement begins with controlling the mind (*xiángxīn*)... As it is said, when refinement of the self is complete and pure, the restored elixir (inherent spiritual awareness) manifests spontaneously.

The *Ode to Comprehending the Dào* says, “Before the refinement of restoring the elixir, first refine your (original) nature (*liànxìng*). Before cultivating the great medicine (*dàyào*), first cultivate the mind (*xiūxīn*). When your (original) nature is still, news of the elixir (*dān*) will automatically arrive. When the mind is still, then the seedling of medicine (*yào*, i.e. the elixir) grows.”

To restore the elixir is especially easy; to refine the self (*liànjǐ*) is most difficult. For as long as the self (*jǐ*) is not refined until there is no self (*wújǐ*), then your (original) nature (*xìng*) will not be motionless and mind will not be still. How then can the elixir (*dān*) be restored?

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

Overcoming the conditioned human mind essentially involves control of the passions. Once these destructive mental traits have been conquered, the self can be further refined so that the spirit eventually experiences Reality:

The first imperative of self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is to control anger (*fēn*) and subdue desire (*yù*). The energy of anger is the wayward stimulus of an excitable nature. With complete disregard for your (original)

nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*), and with no concern for life and death, it flares up instantly upon stimulus, like an unstoppable fire on a mountain range. If it is not controlled by practice, and refined to remove the smoke and flame, it completely obscures Reality. . . .

Desire dwells in the thinking spirit (*shíshén*, the thinking and knowing aspect) of the human mind (*rénxīn*). It flares up upon seeing things or upon exposure to situations. The six senses and seven passions all go out and become active. They are unstoppable, like a band of raiders stealing treasures. Unless stopped by powerful force, and refined into something that is immovable and unshakeable, this (desire) easily hinders the practice of *Dào*. ‘Refining silver in water for gold essence’ means refinement of the human mind (*rénxīn*) into a mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) that is no-mind (*wúxīn*).

How can those who practise *Dào* not control anger and subdue desire first, in order to refine the self (*liànjǐ*)? Alas, while restoring the elixir takes but a moment, self-refinement requires ten (lunar) months. How can this be considered a small task?

Líu Yīmíng, Jīndān sìbǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

“Ten (lunar) months” refers to the notional ‘gestation’ period of spiritual awareness. However, there is no fixed time for a practitioner to attain enlightenment. The metaphor is used to explain that a period of time and effort is required for “self-refinement” and “restoring the elixir” of spiritual awareness. Master Líu Yīmíng advises that these first steps of self-refinement require sustained effort and diligence in order for the foundation to be strong:

For a house to endure over a long time, it all begins with the laying of the foundation (*zhùjī*). If the foundation is strong, the house is stable and durable. If the foundation is inadequate, the house will tilt after some time. This is the principle.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of cultivating the Truth (*xiūzhēn*) and becoming aware of one’s Origin (*wùběn*).

In the cultivation of Truth (*xiūzhēn*), nothing is more important than self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) and control of the mind (*chíxīn*). Self-refinement is to remove selfish desires. Control of the mind is to strengthen the willpower.

When selfish desires are removed and willpower is firm, the foundation will be strong and immovable. Then the four forms (*sìxiàng*, i.e. primary principles) will be unified, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) will be gathered together, *yīn* and *yáng* (i.e. duality) will be surmounted, and (the process of) creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*) will be overcome. Cultivate both your (original) nature and (true spiritual)

life (*xìngmìng*), and forge ahead. Then you will enter the subtle realm and realize the self. You will have the advantage wherever you are. This is like building a strong foundation that can endure the weight of wood, stones, bricks, and tiles.

If the foundation is not firm, you will lack determination and devotion. You will be too unstable, diligent in the beginning but lazy at the end, practising and failing at the same time, wanting to advance but falling behind instead – so your efforts will all be in vain. This is like an inadequate foundation: even if you can build a house on it, after some time the house will tilt.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Master Liú Yīmíng expands on this by introducing two important *nèidān* terms: *fǎn* (restoration) and *huán* (reversion, return). He discusses the loss of spirituality (*yáng*, the ultimate positivity) and the increasing materiality (*yīn*, the ultimate negativity) that arise from contact with the world and its affairs:

The path of cultivating Truth (*xiūzhēn*) is the path of reversion (*fǎn*) and restoration (*huán*). Reversion means that the (true) self returns to where it used to be. Restoration means to recover *yáng* (spirituality) after losing it. It is the path of reversing and restoring true *yáng* (the spiritual) from within pure *yīn* (the material).

Human beings attend to things in ways acquired after birth. Since first taking birth, human beings have become pure *yīn*, and the inherent *yáng* energy has been consumed and exhausted to almost nothing. They no longer have the ability to reverse and restore. How then can they return (*fù*) to their previous condition, recovering what was lost?

The foremost exercise in the practice of reversion and restoration (*fǎnhuán*) is to refine the self (*liànjǐ*) and to build the foundation (*zhùjī*). Self-refinement is an exercise in refining worldly roots, temperaments and wayward natures, as well as all accumulated ‘guests’ (*kèqì*, tendencies, impressions) from past *kalpas* (S. aeons). It is an exercise in controlling anger (*fēn*) and subduing desire (*yù*), restraining the self and returning to propriety (*kèjǐfùlǐ*).

If you can control anger and subdue desire, restrain the self and return to propriety (*kèjǐfùlǐ*), you will have no thoughts or anxieties. You will be immovable and unshakable, because your foundation will be firm. It is like building a house, which should commence with the building of a foundation: if the foundation is firm, it can sustain the weight of all the wood and bricks placed upon it. Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is part of laying the foundation (*zhùjī*). Laying the foundation is part of self-refinement.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

He also adds that the process of self-refinement is more than simple mindfulness and preservation of sexual energy, as some schools believe:

Those who are ignorant of this take the meaning of self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) as being mindful, and laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) as preventing the loss of sexual energy (*jīng*). This is mistaken. The exercise of self-refinement is an important process from the beginning to the end of the path of the elixir (*dāndào*). It is only completed when all *yīn* energy is removed and there is only pure *yáng*. Until there is only pure *yáng* and no *yīn*, the exercise of self-refinement should not be stopped. If the idea of being mindful and preventing the loss of sexual energy (*jīng*) were to be regarded as self-refinement and laying the foundation, how could the great work of *jīndān* (gold elixir) be accomplished?

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

Master Liú Yīmíng explains that self-refinement is essentially refinement of the human mind (*rénxīn*). When the human mind is refined, the pure, original mind (of *Dào*) automatically manifests. Then all aspects of body and mind come into balance and harmony:

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is simply the refinement of *yīn* (i.e. negativity, materiality) within the self. What is the *yīn* within the self? It is the human mind (*rénxīn*).

In human beings, vital essence (*jīng*), spirit (*shén*), higher soul (*hún*), lower soul (*pò*), and self-will (*yì*) are all *yīn* – they all take orders from the human mind (*rénxīn*). If the human mind is still, these five are also still. If the human mind is disturbed, these five are also disturbed. Therefore, self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is simply refinement of this human mind. Refine and remove the human mind, and the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is revealed. When the mind of *Dào* is revealed, vital essence, spirit, higher soul, lower soul, and will are all transformed into a protective power of truth.

The human body is like a home. In human beings, vital essence, spirit, higher soul, lower soul, and will are like people at home. Refine the human mind (*rénxīn*) so that the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) can grow. Then vital essence, spirit, higher soul, lower soul and will be at peace, each in its own place and attending to its own affairs. Pleasure, anger, sadness and delight are all calmed, and therefore centred and disciplined. This is like an orderly family.

Liú Yīmíng, *Zhōuyì* (37) *chǎnzhēn*, ZW245, DS13

In his *Further Discriminations in Cultivating Reality*, master Liú Yīmíng devotes a chapter to ‘refining oneself (*liànjǐ*)’ and ‘laying the foundation

(*zhùjī*)', explaining that the groundwork must be completed before the goal can be attained:

Cultivating the great way of *jīndān* (gold elixir) is only possible by laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) for refining oneself (*liànjǐ*). Yet, laying the foundation and refining oneself are not two separate things; they form a single principle. Laying the foundation does not occur separately from refining oneself, and refining oneself occurs within laying the foundation. It does not mean that one should lay the foundations separately from refining oneself, or that one should refine oneself after laying the foundation.

What we call 'refining oneself (*liànjǐ*)' refers to the practice; what we call 'laying the foundation (*zhùjī*)' refers to making one's *qì* (subtle life energy) stable.

When refinement becomes ripe, one can look forward to attaining the restored elixir (*huándān*); when the foundations have been laid and are solid and stable (*gù*), the divine chamber (*shénshì*, i.e. receptivity) is steady and firm.

How could this be a minor undertaking? Ancestor Lǚ (Lǚ Dòngbīn, b.796 CE) compounded the restored elixir (*huándān*) on only three occasions, because his refining (*liànjǐ*) was not mature. Zǐqīng (Bái Yùchán, C13th) was disturbed by wind and thunder in the middle of the night, because he had not laid the foundations (*zhùjī*) in a stable manner. These two masters are foremost among the divine immortals, the spiritual guides of all the schools of teaching. If even their practice had not come to fruition and was incomplete, how much more is this true of anyone else?

What is the meaning of laying the foundation for refining oneself (*liànjǐ*)? 'Oneself (*jǐ*)' means your selfish desires, your egoism, and your selfhood. 'Foundations' means having a real basis, a root. People do not succeed in attaining the *Dào* because of their egoism and selfhood. When egoism and selfhood are there, you are filled with a selfish mind and cannot proceed from a real basis. A thousand devils and a hundred obstacles obstruct the sacred lair (*língkū*, i.e. one's centre of being); at every step you find obstacles and hindrances, and in every pursuit you get stuck in the mud. The six bandits (senses) are ravenous beasts, and the seven passions are a gang of accomplices; they deplete your goodness of mind, damage your true nature (*zhēnxìng*), and disturb your inherent (spiritual) life (*běnmìng*). When the spirit is veiled and the *qì* (subtle life energy) is impure, wherever you go there are only errant thoughts and an erroneous mind. How then can you encourage virtue, cultivate merit, and attain the great *Dào*?

Our ancestral masters taught that one should first of all lay the foundations for refining oneself (*liànjǐ*). This is because they wanted

us to perform the whole practice from a real basis, in order to rise up from what is below to what is above, and to reach the deep from the shallows through a process of gradual progress.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiūzhēn hòubiàn, ZW261, DS7; cf. CTP pp.143–44

See also: **jǐ** (▶1), **liànxīn**, **liànxíng** (8.1), **zhìxīn**, **zhùjī**.

1. E.g. Liú Yīmíng, *Wùzhēn zhízhǐ*, ZW253, DS17; *Wùdào lù*, ZW268, DS18.
2. E.g. Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14.
3. *Qinyuán chūn*, DZ136, attributed to Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE).

liànxīn (C) *Lit.* refinement (*liàn*) of the mind (*xīn*); refining the mind; in the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, the process of refining the impure mind in order to smelt (extract from it) the pure mind.

Refinement of the mind is regarded by master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) as the first step on the path of spirituality:

On the gold (*jīn*) path of the immortals, the very first thing is to refine the mind (*xīn*), so that it can be neither stirred by the seven emotions (*qīqíng*) nor upset by the five thieves (*wǔzéi*, i.e. the senses); then the six sense organs (*liùgēn*) are contained, and sexual energy (*jīng*) is not easily roused.

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872

The renowned master Wáng Zhìjīn (C13th) recalls that his own master Wáng Zhé recommended that, as an integral part of refining the mind, it is better to recognize and correct one's own faults and impediments, rather than become involved in the criticism of others; to observe and emulate the positive traits of others, while taking note of and avoiding their negative tendencies:

The master (Wáng Zhé) said, “People who practise cultivation should abstain from gossiping about others being good or bad, right or wrong, or prying into their affairs.”

Do not speak or think of anything that does not concern you. The moment you speak of right or wrong, you veil yourself. Focus on refining your mind (*liànxīn*) and always be vigilant of your own wrongdoing. How do you have time to concern yourself with others' affairs?

Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. Learn from others' strengths; avoid their weaknesses; and do not concern yourself with anything beyond that. Gradually, you will become calm and peaceful.

Wáng Zhìjīn, Pánshān qīyún yǔlù, JY229 27a–b, DZ1059

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) similarly advises the examination of one's own faults, rather than the faults of others. He tells practitioners to remain fully focused on refining the mind at all times, without entertaining the ambition of future spiritual attainment. Imagine, he says, that death is at hand, and be fully present and concentrated within. Refinement of the mind is helped by simple living and by minimizing attachments and desires. In order to live simply, realize that all personal inclinations and habits are unreal and will be abandoned in the same way that the body itself is abandoned at death. Control and authority over the mind is essential in order to refine it. This control must be decisive and constant, with no letting up until the goal is reached:

Those who practise the *Dào* should see this body like an ox being led to slaughter – each step taking it closer to death. So stick to the view that you are dead, and detach yourself from everything. Then – even if you are surrounded by a wide variety of events and happenings – your eyes will see nothing, your ears will hear nothing, all your thoughts will be forgotten, and you will renounce your entire body, what to say of other things. By refining the mind in this way, you will make rapid progress.

Those who practise the *Dào* keep the *Dào* in their thoughts at all times and in all situations, whether they are active or inactive, busy or resting, sitting or sleeping. When facing trials and tribulations, they remain unchanged and unmoved. Even when at ease and in comfort, they tread carefully as if they are in danger. In this way, with all their might and sincerity, they forge ahead single-mindedly, unafraid of life or death. Such is a person with determination.

When you first begin to practise refinement of the mind (*liànxīn*), you must cease from all the things you have been accustomed to, including egoistic passions and attachments, scheming and strategizing, measuring and calculating, swindling and slandering. One by one, you should rid yourself of all ingrained habits, including alcohol, sex, wealth, anger, ladder climbing, discursive thinking, egotism, deviousness, craving, and ambition.

When you are unfettered by outer habits, the body will become unburdened and full of energy. When you are free of acquired habits within, the mind will be light and joyful. After being unburdened without and joyful within for a long period, you will become an adept, naturally free of deluded thoughts. Then you must remain on guard and vigilant at all times, by being cautious with words, moderate with food and drink, and abstemious with sleep. With the outside and inside supporting each other, all worldly defilements will be cleansed until nothing is left. When your original (spiritual) life (*běnmìng*), which is the primordial spirit (*yuánshén*), reveals itself naturally, you will

experience and enjoy free and unrestrained ease. Then you will be a supreme devotee of the *Dào* (*dàorén*).

Those who practise the *Dào* must put in great effort in their exercises to refine, give up, and remove discriminatory habits of thought and mind. When the time comes, even this body has to be given up, how much more so all thoughts in the delusional mind? They must be removed completely one by one. Then there will be no obstruction due to anxiety or distress.

Nothing outside the self (*shēn*) is worthy of the mind's attention. These things come and go before one's eyes like mosquitoes and insects. You can only be at ease if they are brushed away. These things we have in our mind are the seeds of reincarnation; because they are hard to dismiss, great effort is required to do so.

Twenty-four hours a day you must watch the state of your mind. Whenever there is a thought, if it is false, extinguish it; if it is true, use it. Day and night, in every moment, at all times, whether active or still, crush the obstinate mind to pieces. Whenever a thought occurs, promptly chase it away. Repeatedly chase it away until not a single thread of it is left. Then your foundation will be peaceful. Even the slightest thought should be eliminated. Even the smallest achievement should be accumulated. One cut detaches all. One thought of true eternity endures for infinite *kalpas* (S. aeons) neither changing nor diminishing.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Yáng Dàoshēng goes on to say that control of the mind is of primary importance, and that while it is necessary to attend to the circumstances of life, the goal should not be forgotten. He counsels practitioners to protect the mind by keeping outer things from entering – in the same way that one closes one's eyes to avoid the entry of dust:

Entangled in the rise and fall of the myriad things and myriad events, if you are to cope and respond effectively, you must remain in control and not be swept away by the current. It is like protecting your eyes. By closing your eyes, you do not permit even the finest dust to get into them. With such care and protection, after a long time you will eventually see results. For as long as the mind allows things to enter, it will be drawn outwards by those things, and you will not be in control of yourself.

When those who practise the *Dào* refine the mind (*liànxīn*) and attend to things, they must first have inner ease, contentment, and peace. While taking care of external things, they are always centred. Their bones may be broken, their body may be crushed, but their mind

remains unmoved. As to what to do first and what to do next, these are all illusory things; nothing is fixed. The mind should die, while activities continue. Whatever needs your immediate attention, handle it peacefully and calmly, without disturbance or ignorance. This is to be continually flexible while always remaining still.

When things arise, you must examine them carefully. When things happen, you must attend to them and then let them go. Even though external things are illusory to those who practise *Dào*, they must still be taken care of. Attend to things without ego; then the mind will be empty and you will be unobstructed when things do arise, because emptiness does not obstruct the myriad things, and the myriad things do not obstruct emptiness. It is like the myriad forms and myriad beings in creation – they act individually without obstructing each other. If you keep the ego in the mind and react to everything that comes along, then contact and anxiety create conflict and resistance, which will disturb the mind. Once the mind is moved, there is no peace or calm. Even if you work hard all day, you will be simply toiling without achieving anything.

When living your life among people and you have affairs to attend to, be particularly vigilant of your own mind to prevent it from changing and moving. Be constantly on the lookout for your own faults. Do not concern yourself with the faults of others. . . .

The above passages . . . are all about the work of cleansing and refining the nature of the mind (*liànxīn xìng*) in order to merge with the wonderful emptiness of the *Dào*. The aspiring seeker who masters the subject and does the work will not be far from the *Dào*.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

See also: *shōuxīn, xiángxīn, xīnzhāi, xiūxīn, zhìxīn*.

liànxìng, liàn zhēnxìng (C) *Lit.* refinement (*liàn*) of true (*zhēn*) nature (*xìng*); refinement of real nature; refinement of one's original nature. According to Daoist philosophy, the foundation of being in all living creatures is their original, true, or real nature. This real or original nature has become obscured by the activity of the human mind and the conditioning arising from the influence of worldly and physical circumstances. Spiritual evolution is understood as the refining of one's inner nature leading to the revelation of one's original or true nature. The means of refinement advocated by Daoist masters have always included meditation as their basis.

According to the erudite monk Qín Zhì'ān's thirteenth-century record of the early patriarchs of the *Quánzhēn* school, master Liú Chǔxuán (C12th) lived for some time in the bustling city of Luòjīng (present-day Luòyáng).

Involved in its activity, yet unnoticed by people, Liú Chǔxuán remained undisturbed by his surroundings because he had refined his inner nature. The example illustrates that with advanced self-refinement there is nothing that can disturb the inner tranquillity and balance of a true adept, who remains at peace under all circumstances:

The teacher (Liú Chǔxuán) hid his traces in Luòjīng and refined his nature (*liànxìng*) in the midst of the intermingling of the dust. He nurtured his simplicity (*sù*) amidst the clamour of the shops and market places. (The sound of) wind and string instruments did not disturb his inner harmony. Beautiful sights did not arouse his vital essence (*jīng*). His mind was like ashes, and because of this he regarded coldness as a benefit. His body was like a tree, and therefore did not act in lewd ways. If people gave him food, he would eat. But if not, he showed no trace of resentment. If someone asked him something, he would answer with hand gestures.

Qín Zhì'ān, Jīnlián zhèngzōng jì, DZ173 4:5a; cf. in TPEQ p.50

Wáng Zhé, Liú Chǔxuán's master, offers an analogy to convey his teaching concerning the harmonizing and refining of one's inner nature:

Regulating one's innate nature (*xìng*) is like tuning the strings of a zither. If they are too tight, they will break. If they are too loose, they will not resonate. Find the mid-place between taut and slack, and the zither will be tuned.

It is also like forging a sword. If there is too much steel, it will break. If there is too much tin, it will bend. Find the harmonious mixture of steel and tin, and the sword will be useful.

To harmonize and refine your (innate) nature (*liànxìng*), embrace these two methods. Then you yourself will become wondrous.

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng lǐjiào shíwǔ lùn 9, JY190 4a, DZ1233; cf. HDP8 p.40

See also: **xìng** (8.1).

liáo, liáoshāng, yī, zhì, yīzhì, yù (C) *Lit.* to treat (*liáo, yī, zhì, yù*) an injury (*shāng*); to treat a wound; to cure an illness, to make healthy again, to heal (*yīzhì*), healing; spiritually, the healing of any tendency or characteristic that might adversely affect the practitioner and hinder spiritual progress, including mental or spiritual ailments such as greed, anger, egotism, pride, desire, and material tendencies.

To heal bodily disease, Daoists have used Classical and Traditional Chinese Medicine. In modern times, they may also use allopathic medicine. However, there are some Daoists who believe that even physical ailments

can and should be cured from within through meditation or *nèidān* (inner alchemy) techniques that involve breathing exercises and harmonizing of the body's subtle energy system. This approach reflects the view that physical degeneration of any kind is a result of the loss or disharmony of *jīng* (vital essence) and *qì* (subtle life energy), and the dissipation of *shén* (spirit). This happens when the mind gives way to worldly desires or negative emotions, thoughts, and actions. As master Mǎ Yù (C12th) relates:

I had been in my hut in Zhōngnán with windy (bare) thighs and bare feet and with no fire or light for just six years. Prompted by a sudden mental inclination and trusting my steps, I wandered westward, arrived at Huátíng, and took up residence in a mountain cave. By accident I became poisoned, . . . vomited blood, and was afflicted with a coughing disease. A crowd came to the scene very quickly. Many friends of the *Dào* gave me medicine. I bowed and received it, but refused to take it. They said to me, “You must eat raw onions and strong vinegar as an antidote to the poison.” I thought this through very thoroughly and concluded that when a Daoist has a disease, no other person is able to cure (*yī*) it, and that I must cure (*zhì*) myself by cultivating and refining the priceless treasures in my body. Eventually, the disease healed (*liáo*) itself.

Mǎ Yù, *Dòngxuán jīnyù jí*, DZ1149 8:15b–16a, JY199; cf. in TPEQ pp.76–77

Jīng, *qì*, and *shén* – known as the “three treasures (*sānbǎo*)” or the “priceless treasures” – are regarded in Traditional Chinese Medicine as the three essentials of bodily existence. They are understood as three aspects of the one primal Energy that underlies all things. In the *nèidān* tradition, practitioners refine *jīng* (vital essence) and transform it into *qì* (subtle life energy). *Qì* is refined and transformed into *shén* (spirit), and *shén* is refined to the point where it is able to merge into the *Dào*. Spiritual healing is then complete. Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) uses the healing of physical illness as an analogy for the healing of spiritual illness, representing the “three treasures” as the required “medicines”. ‘Firing’ and creation of the ‘elixir’ are standard *nèidān* metaphors for the process of spiritual refinement:

Just as you would treat (*yīzhì*) a sick person with medicines to return him to good health, ‘to gather medicines (*cǎiyào*)’ is to collect the three treasures (*sānbǎo*) of this one Energy (*yīqì*), to activate the function of true fire, to refine them into the elixir (*dān*, i.e. original spiritual awareness), and to effortlessly transform the myriad negative energies of the body in order to return to one’s pure and original *yáng* (positive) condition, which is clear and clean, and free of impurity and worldly attributes.

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

To “gather medicines” means to prevent any further leakage of the “three treasures”, and then to preserve and refine them to the point where each energy merges into the one above.

Accounts of miraculous healing are frequently found in the hagiographic biographies of Daoist adepts and masters, particularly those of the *Quánzhēn* school. While some healings occur through the use of medicines or talismans (*fú*), including talismanic water (*fúshuǐ*), there are also accounts of cures in which healing power emanates from the master himself. In one such instance, master Wáng Chǔyī (C13th) heals a sick person by allowing the individual to eat his leftover food. The same master is also said to have resurrected dead bodies simply by blowing on them.¹ In another case, master Wáng Zhé (C12th) heals the chronic rheumatism of his disciple Tán Chǔduān by allowing him to spend one cold night huddled up against his master’s legs. The immense warmth emanating from the master’s body on that freezing night causes Tán Chǔduān’s shivering body to perspire heavily. The following morning Tán Chǔduān wakes up feeling as if he had never been ill.²

The *Biographies of Spirit Immortals* (C4th CE) records the miraculous healing abilities of Yùzǐ – a master who lived during the *Zhōu* dynasty (1046–256 BCE) and was an initiate of the immortal Chángsāngzǐ:

He would place a bowl of water between his two elbows and blow upon it, whereupon a brilliant red light would shoot up from the water to a height of ten feet. This water he used for medical purposes (*zhì bǎibìng*, ‘cure every illness’), giving it to the patient to drink if the disease was internal, or washing him with it if it was external. In every case, the cure (*yù*) was instantaneous.

Gě Hóng, “Yùzǐ,” *Shénxiān zhuàn*, JH89 4, GCI pp.20–21

1. *Tǐxuán zhēnrén xiǎnyì lù*, DZ594 11a–12a, in *TPEQ* p.90.
2. *Lìshì zhēnxiān tǐdào tōngjiàn xùbiān*, DZ297 2:1b–2a, in *TPEQ* p.90.

lìxíng (C) *Lit.* to make every effort (*lì*) in performing (*xíng*); to act energetically (*lìxíng*); to practice diligently, devoted practice; in Daoism, to be diligent in spiritual practice.

At the end of the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th), a long text describing a form of Daoist meditation, the author advises his readers not to waste a moment:

I urge each and every one of you to exert yourselves and practise diligently (*lìxíng*) this (meditation) method. It would be such a waste to let the days go past. A day without practice (*xíng*) is a day living like a ghost. A single breath in practice (*xíng*) is a breath as a true immortal (*zhēnxiān*). I urge you! I urge you!

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 13, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

In his *Anthology of Central Harmony*, master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) describes the characteristics and results of diligent practice:

Wisdom (*zhì*) is profound knowledge (*shēnzhī*) of the inherent order of things. Action is the devoted practice (*lìxíng*) of experiencing the *Dào*. With profound knowledge of the inherent order of things, you know without looking. With devoted practice (*lìxíng*) of experiencing the *Dào*, you accomplish without doing.

Knowing the creation without leaving the house (*i.e.* the body) and by seeing the inherent *Dào* (*i.e.* by looking within) without looking out of the window (*i.e.* the eyes) is to have profound knowledge.¹ Strengthening the self ceaselessly and adapting to all situations is devoted practice (*lìxíng*) of experiencing (the *Dào*).

Knowing disturbance while remaining undisturbed, knowing perils while remaining unimperilled, knowing death while living, knowing calamity while in bliss – this is to have profound knowledge. Living in the body without being burdened by the body, using the mind without being enslaved by the mind, acting in the world without being disturbed by the world, attending to affairs without being hindered by affairs – is devoted practice (*lìxíng*) of experiencing (the *Dào*).

With profound knowledge of the inherent order of things, disturbance becomes peace, peril becomes security, death becomes living, and calamity becomes good fortune. With devoted practice (*lìxíng*) of experiencing the *Dào*, you are rooted in the realm of eternity, your mind rests in the realm of the mysterious (*xuán*), your world is at great peace, and your great work is accomplished. Who can achieve this without great wisdom and great practice?

Lǐ Dàochún, *Zhōnghé jí*, DZ249, JY226

1. Cf. *Dàodé jīng* 47.

logismos *Lit.* reasoning; specifically discursive reasoning, excluding practical thought (*dianoia*) concerning mundane matters; the process of drawing conclusions from facts by means of logical deduction; also, thought, consideration, cogitation, meditation, spiritual awareness; the upward movement of the soul and mind while still entangled with the body; from *logizomai* (to reason, to meditate).

The upward movement of the soul (*i.e.* *logismos*) while still entangled in the body is a reflection or distortion of direct knowledge (*noēsis*), which is only possible after withdrawal from the body. Both *logismos* and *noēsis* refer to the activity of the soul when it is turned upward (as opposed to the downward tendency of sense perception, *aisthēsis*). But while *logismos* is the upward movement of the soul as it withdraws from the body, *noēsis* is the merging of

the knower and known when withdrawal from the body is complete. In Plato, *logismos* and *noēsis* are sometimes used interchangeably. He uses *logismos* to mean discursive reasoning, as well as the upward movement of the soul and the spiritual awareness and understanding that replaces reasoning at the higher level. Plotinus, however, is more careful in maintaining a distinction between *noēsis* and *logismos*.

The term has its modern parallels. In modern Greece, the word used for meditation is *dialogismos* (thought, reflection), and the corresponding verb is *dialogizomai* (to meditate). The words are also used for deep thinking, pondering upon and thinking aimed at realizing something in particular, as in ‘to meditate revenge’. However, these meanings are more literary, older, and are uncommon in everyday language.

Like *logos* and *logismos*, the verb *logizomai* also has several meanings including ‘to count’, ‘to calculate’, ‘to reckon’, ‘to reason’, ‘to infer’, and so on. But in certain crucial passages none of these seem adequate, and *logismos* is more accurately rendered as spiritual practice aimed at withdrawal from the body. Many scholarly translators, however, take *logismos* to mean ‘reasoning’ under all circumstances. Thus, the mistranslation of a single word often converts the meaning of an entire passage from a mystic to an intellectual sense. Just as the word ‘meditation’ can mean to ‘consider or think about things’, as well as to withdraw from the body in spiritual practice, so too does *logismos* also possess a dual meaning.

Plato uses various etymologically related words for meditation in the sense of touching Reality through the process of withdrawal from the body and the upward movement of the soul and mind:

SOCRATĒS: When does the soul attain the Truth? For whenever it attempts to examine (*skopein*) anything in the company of the body, it is clearly deceived by it.

SIMMIAS: Quite so.

SOCRATĒS: Then is it not in the course of meditation (*logizesthai*, i.e. the upward movement of the soul), if at all, that the soul can get a clear view of Reality?

SIMMIAS: Yes.

SOCRATĒS: And surely the soul can meditate (*logizetai*) best when it is free of all distractions, such as sounds or sights or pain or pleasure of any kind – that is, when she takes leave of the body, and has as little as possible to do with it; when she has no bodily sense or desire, but aspires only for Reality.

Plato, Phaedo 65b–c; cf. DP1 pp.415–16, LDST p.118

Through the upward movement of the soul (i.e. *logismos*), the soul can rise above the pain and pleasure it experiences when entangled with the body, but only through a lifetime’s commitment to the practice:

The soul of a philosopher . . . believes that it will gain release from the bondage to pleasure and pain by following the upward movement of the soul (*i.e. logismos*) and by abiding always in this state, contemplating (*theaomai*) that which is true and divine and not a matter of opinion, and drawing inspiration from it. For such a soul believes that this is the right way to live for as long as life endures, and then at death to pass to a place that is akin and similar to its own nature, and there be free forever from human ills.

Plato, Phaedo 84a–b; cf. CDP p.67, DP1 p.439, PEA pp.290–93

A revealing use of *logismos* also appears in Plato's *Meno*. Socratēs equates the expression *aitias logismos* to remembrance or recollection (*anamnēsis*). Literally, *aitias logismos* means 'awareness of the cause', which in less obscure language implies essential awareness of the primal, divine Cause or Source. In the context, it also includes the practice that develops this awareness, *i.e.* spiritual meditation. Illusions or "opinions", says Socratēs, "run away from a man's mind" like "runaway slaves", and the only way to control them is to "tether them by holding onto the upward movement of the soul towards its Cause (*aitias logismos*)."¹ And the way to achieve this, he says, is through recollection (*anamnēsis*).¹

The immortal soul, as Socratēs had previously observed, has already seen the spiritual world of archetypal forms or patterns before its birth. Therefore, the goal of spiritual practice is to recall, to gain recollection or remembrance (*anamnēsis*) of the spiritual realms that it knew and contemplated before its descent into the body.² *Aitias logismos* is equated with this remembrance or recollection of the soul's true immortal or essential state.

In *Phaedo*, Plato says that things that are unchanging and invisible are grasped through the "spiritual awareness (*logismos*) of the mind (*dianoia*)". Visible things, by contrast, are grasped by the senses:

These concrete objects you can touch and see and perceive with your other senses; but those unchanging things you cannot possibly comprehend except with the spiritual awareness (*logismos*) of the mind (*dianoia*); they are invisible to our sight.

Plato, Phaedo 79a; cf. CDP p.62, DP1 p.433

In the *Sophist*, it is said that "The philosopher always devotes himself through *logismos* (meditation, spiritual awareness) to the Essence of Being," while the "eyes of the souls of the multitude are not strong enough to keep their gaze fixed upon the Divine."³

In *Parmenidēs*, when distinguishing the archetypal forms from their sensible particulars, Socratēs notes that these forms can only be apprehended through *logismos*.⁴ In the *Republic*, he observes that the true nature of the soul can be known only by this same *logismos*.⁵

Scholarly translations, especially of the past, generally translate *logismos*, even in such contexts, by terms such as ‘reasoning’ or ‘reflection’. But it does no justice to Plato’s subtle intelligence to suggest that he really thought that the higher worlds, the divine Reality and the immortality of the soul could all be known and experienced merely by thinking about them.

In fact, it is *logismos* not only of the lower, but also of the higher kind, that distinguishes human beings from other species. Human beings are not only capable of reasoning, they can also rise from the multiplicity of sensory perception to the oneness of spiritual vision. Being able to rise above the senses is a specifically human gift:

A human being must have understanding of those things that are universal, and should proceed from the multiplicity of sense perceptions into oneness by upward withdrawal through meditation (*logismos*); and this implies recollection (*anamnēsis*) of those things that our soul once beheld when it journeyed with God – looking down upon those things which we now suppose to exist, and gazing up at that which truly exists.

Plato, Phaedrus 249b–c; cf. CDP p.496, PEA pp.480–81

Here Socratēs makes it clear that in practice the process of *logismos* is one of gathering the attention from the multiplicity of sensory things, and focusing it upon the oneness of the Divine. But specific information concerning the details of this practice remain unknown because Plato never revealed them.⁶

Plato was not the first to use *logismos* in a sense associated with the care of the soul. The term is also found in an excerpt ascribed by the anthologist Stobaeus (c.5th CE) to Democritus (c.460–370 BCE, developer of the atomist theory of matter), where a mystical meaning is again apparent:

By meditation (*logismos*), drive out the unrestrained suffering of a deadened soul (*narkosa psychē*).

Democritus, Fragment B290, DK2 p.205, in Stobaeus; cf. ILP p.191

Logismos, however, has been used in its more mundane sense, even by mystics. Plotinus, for instance, draws a careful distinction between *logismos* as discursive reasoning and *noēsis* (spiritual, intuitive knowledge). To Plotinus, *logismos* represents the fallen state of the soul, and its association with otherness. Contrasted with sensory perception, which directs the soul entirely downwards, reasoning (*logismos*) is an activity that seeks higher things. Contrasted with *noēsis*, however, which is direct perception through union of the knower and the known, *logismos* is an internal activity of the mind, dealing with analysis and the dissection of meaning. Understood in this sense, *logismos*, like its external manifestation as language, is a weakness, a sign of the soul’s preoccupation with areas not specifically akin to itself:

Does the soul use discursive reasoning (*logismos*) before its descent into and when it leaves the body again? No, reasoning (*logismos*) comes to it here below; it is the act of the soul fallen into perplexity, distracted by cares, and fallen into a state of greater weakness. The need of reasoning (*logismos*) goes with the less self-sufficient intelligence (of the soul in the body). It is like craftsmen, for whom reasoning (*logismos*) only comes into play when there is a problem. When there is no difficulty, their work continues under its own steam.

Plotinus, Enneads 4:3.18; cf. PA4 pp.90–91, PEC p.151

In a memorable passage, Plotinus describes his descent from union with the Divine into the world of analytical and discursive thought (*logismos*):

Many times it has happened: awakening from the body into my self; entering into the self, leaving behind all other things; beholding a marvellous Beauty; then, more than ever, assured of communion with the loftiest part; living the best life, acquiring identity with the Divine. Established firmly within It, I have come to that supreme Reality, being established within myself above all else in the realm of the spirit (*nous*).

Then, after that sojourn in the Divine, there comes the moment of descent from the spiritual to discursive reasoning (*logismos*). And I ask my self how it can happen that I am now descending, and how the soul ever entered into my body, when it is what it has shown itself to be by itself, even while in the body.

Plotinus, Enneads 4:8.1; cf. PA4 pp.396–97, PEC p.200

‘Rational’, ‘reasonable’ and ‘intelligent’ are words commonly associated with the workings of the discursive mind; but Plotinus points out that a much higher level of intuitive intelligence or awareness is attained on rising beyond the limitations of dualistic thinking and analysis that are associated with *logismos* when understood as discursive thinking. Ancient philosophical understanding saw a seamless continuum between the workings of the higher mind and the spiritual awareness that transcends the discursive mind. Hence, he observes that the *logismos* is a reflection of the innate intelligence of the *nous* (spirit), brought about by the confusion of being in the body:

But if souls operate without reasoning (*logismos*) there, how can they still be called rational (*logikos*)? Because they are capable, one might say, when the circumstances arise, of considering rationally with the greatest of ease. . . . Because if reasoning (*logismos*) is understood to be the state that always exists in them, proceeding from the *nous*, and which manifests itself in stillness and is something like a reflection

or imprinting of *nous*, then they would understand that reasoning (*logismos*) is used in that other world too.

Plotinus, Enneads 4:3.18; cf. PA4 pp.90–91

The passage is significant because it reveals the close interconnection between *logismos* (as the upward movement of the soul while in the body) and the higher activity of the *nous* (experienced after withdrawal from the body), and the fact that *logismos*, at its best, is a reflection or imprint of the activity of *nous*, and only manifests itself in stillness. This may be a thought-provoking alternative to the tendency to set discursive reasoning against intuitive and direct knowledge, a tendency of which Plotinus was aware, and which he tried to address and remedy by showing how one blends into the other.

First-century, Greek-speaking, Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus, gives *logismos* a meaning close to the spiritual dimension when speaking of the soul's capacity to receive the blessings of the divine *Logos*:

And when the blessed soul stretches forth its own spiritual awareness (*logismos*) as a most holy drinking vessel – who is it that pours forth the sacred measures of true joy but the *Logos*, the Cupbearer of God and master of the feast – he who differs not from the draught he pours – his own self free from all dilution, who is the delight, the sweetness, the forthpouring, the good cheer, the ambrosial drug (to take for our own use the poet's terms) whose medicine gives joy and contentment.

Philo Judaeus, On Dreams II:37; cf. PCW5 pp.554–55, TGH1 pp.245–46

In *Special Laws*, Philo speaks of the quest for God as the most worthwhile employment, however difficult it may be, for it brings in its train a state of bliss – of “untold delights and joys”:

As for the divine Essence, though it is very difficult to ascertain and very hard properly to comprehend, we must still, as far as possible, investigate Its nature. For nothing is better than to seek out the nature of the true God, even though the discovery may transcend human ability, since the very desire and endeavour to comprehend it is able by itself to furnish untold delights and joys.

Philo Judaeus, Special Laws I:7; cf. PCW7 pp.118–21, WPJ3 p.183

He then goes on to speak of those who have gone beyond mere discussion of this quest and through “meditation (*logismos*)” have ascended into the realms of the spirit, becoming drenched in “unalloyed light”, such that the “eye of the soul (*psychēs omma*) becomes dazzled and awestruck by the splendour”:

The witness of this fact are those who have not merely tasted philosophy with their outermost lips, but who have abundantly feasted on

its teachings (*logoi*) and its doctrines (*dogmata*); for the meditation (*logismos*) of these men, being raised on high far above the earth, roams in the air (spirit), and soaring aloft with the sun, and moon, and all the firmament of heaven, being eager to behold all the things that exist therein, finds its power of vision overwhelmed. For so great is the unalloyed light being poured over it, that the eye of the soul (*psychēs omma*) becomes dazzled and awestruck by the splendour.

Philo Judaeus, Special Laws 1:7; cf. WPI3 p.183

Clearly, no normal reasoning processes could induce such an expansion of consciousness, even in a person of superlative imagination. But meditation or spiritual practice certainly does. That is a part of its purpose.

The centuries immediately prior to Philo Judaeus saw the spread of Greek language and culture all around the Mediterranean. This is why some biblical and allied texts, such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which identifies Wisdom (Gk. *Sophia*, He. *Hokhmah*) as the divine creative power, are written in Greek. Another of these texts, *4 Maccabees*, is a philosophical work that extols reasoning (*logismos*) as the faculty by which self-control may be exercised. Although the author mainly speaks of the rational faculty, he also maintains that “devout meditation (*eusebēs logismos*)” and “holy meditation (*theios logismos*)” are the means to control the passions. It suggests that the author may have been referring to a process more contemplative than discursive. At the outset, he states his purpose:

To discuss whether devout meditation (*eusebēs logismos*) is absolute master of the passions . . . that hinder self-control (*sōphrosynē*), such as gluttony and lust.

4 Maccabees 1:1, 3; cf. OTP2 p.544, RSV

And later, he counsels:

Let us put on the full armour of self-control (*sōphrosynē*), which is holy meditation (*theios logismos*).

4 Maccabees 13:16; cf. RSV

The term was similarly used in early Christian times. In the Nag Hammadi text, the *Teachings of Silvanus*, there are a number of passages exhorting the reader to spiritual practice. Speaking of the human passions as “wild beasts” and “barbarians”, the writer says:

Do not pierce yourself with the sword of sin. Do not burn yourself, O wretched one, with the fire of lust. Do not surrender yourself to barbarians like a prisoner, nor to wild beasts that wish to trample upon you. For they are as lions that roar very loudly. Be not dead lest they

trample upon you. Be a man! It is possible for you through meditation (*logismos*) to conquer them.

Teachings of Silvanus 108; cf. TS pp.60–61

Normal human reasoning, of course, is incapable of controlling human weaknesses to any great extent, as the writer must have been well aware. He is therefore speaking of something else. In another passage, he continues with the military metaphors:

Wretched man, what will you do if you fall into their hands? Protect yourself lest you be delivered into the hands of your enemies. Entrust yourself to this pair of friends, *Logos* and *Nous*, and no one will be victorious over you. May God dwell in your camp, may His Spirit protect your gates, and may the divine *Nous* protect the walls. Let the holy *Logos* become a torch in your mind, burning the wood which is the whole of sin.

Teachings of Silvanus 86; cf. NHS30 pp.282–85

In this context, the *Logos* and the *Nous* (Spirit, Intelligence) are more or less synonymous, both being commonly encountered terms for the creative and divinely intelligent power and wisdom of God. It is through this power, says the writer, that all negative tendencies can be overcome, and by means of which the “whole of sin” can be burnt up or destroyed. There is little else that this passage can mean. The writer is not referring to human reasoning and the human mind as powers that can burn up sin. In fact, he speaks specifically of the “divine *Nous*” and the “holy *Logos*” to emphasize his meaning.

In another extract from this text, the Word is referred to as the “True Vine of Christ” from which the souls may drink the “true wine”, the divine ambrosia, the intoxicating bliss of conscious contact with God’s own creative power. But to do this, says the writer, you must “first nurture your powers of meditation (*logismos*)” – not, as the original scholarly translation has it, your powers of discursive “reasoning”:

Give yourself gladness from the True Vine of Christ. Satisfy yourself with the true wine in which there is no drunkenness nor error. For it marks the end of drinking, since there is usually in it that which gives joy to the soul and mind through the Spirit of God. But before you can drink of it, you must first nurture your powers of meditation (*logismos*).

Teachings of Silvanus 107–8; cf. NHS30 pp.340–41

The “true wine” of the divine *Logos* brings an end to the “drunkenness” of materiality for it brings great “joy to the soul and mind”, since it stems from

the “Spirit of God”. But first, a person must nurture their ability to meditate on the *Logos*. This is the only way by which the drunkenness of materiality can be ended and contact with the *Logos* established. This does not happen merely by thinking about the *Logos*, but by concentrating the mind through specific spiritual exercises and coming into contact with the divine Word, the “holy *Logos*”. The writer is probably using terminology commonly employed in his community for spiritual practice.

The *Clementine Recognitions* and *Homilies*, almost certainly stemming from the early Judaic side of Christianity, also refer to meditation in a number of places. In one such passage, “heavenly meditation” is described as something that purifies the heart and is required before true worship of God is possible – something that human beings alone can practise, while animals cannot. According to the story, Peter says:

It is necessary to add something to these things that is not a part of everyday human life, but is peculiar to the worship of God. I mean purification. . . . But of what kind? If purity were not a part of service to God, you would roll pleasantly like dung flies.

Therefore, since man has something more than the irrational animals, namely rationality, purify your hearts from evil by heavenly meditation (*ouranios logismos*). . . . For our teacher also, seeing certain Pharisees and scribes among us, . . . although scribes know matters of the Law better than others, yet he reproved them as hypocrites, because they cleansed only the things that appear to men, but omitted purity of heart and the things seen by God alone.

Clementine Homilies (TLG 1271:006), XI:28; cf. CH p.187

Animals, like man, keep their bodies clean by washing. Neither ritual ablutions nor normal daily bathing make man any different from them. The true purity and cleanliness, therefore, which makes a person fit to come before God, requires a great deal more than physical cleansing. The answer given by Peter is “heavenly meditation”, again rendered in the original scholarly translation as “heavenly reasoning”.

See also: **dialectic**, **Logos** (3.1), **meditation**, **theōria**.

1. Plato, *Meno* 97e–98a.
2. Plato, *Meno* 81a–e.
3. Plato, *Sophist* 254a–b; cf. *CDP* p.999, *DP3* p.408.
4. Plato, *Parmenidēs* 130a.
5. Plato, *Republic* 611c.
6. For the above collection of *logismos* references, see F.J. Gonzalez, *Dialectic and Dialogue*, *DDPP* p.349.

lú (C) *Lit.* stove, furnace; in the practice of *wàidān* (outer alchemy), a device used to heat a cauldron or crucible; a term adopted by *nèidān* (inner alchemy) practitioners and used as a metaphor, sometimes in combination with *dǐng* (cauldron), for the human body, which is the laboratory or alchemical workshop within which the spiritual dimension is to be sought. See **dǐnglú**.

mahābandh(a) (H) *Lit.* great (*mahā*) lock (*bandha*); one of the *bandhas* of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

mahāmudrā (S), **phyag rgya chen po** (T), **dà yìn, dàshǒu yìn** (C), **daiin, daishuin** (J) *Lit.* great (*mahā, chen po, dà*) seal (*mudrā, phyag rgya, yìn*); great (*dà*) hand (*shǒu*) seal (*yìn*); great symbol; a term that has evolved multiple meanings, especially in connection with a range of Tibetan tantric teachings. The Tibetan *phyag* is an honorific suffix.

Evolving over several centuries, *mahāmudrā* has come to be a catch-all term for a spectrum of Tibetan tantric teachings associated with the ‘new-translation’ schools (*Kagyü, Sakya, Kadampa, Geluk*, and the smaller *Jonang* tradition), contrasted with the *Nyingma* (‘Old Translation’) tradition. The primary focus of *mahāmudrā* is the pristine and primordial nature of the mind. Within this context, *mahāmudrā* refers, among other things, to: the Reality that is imprinted or ‘stamped’ like a seal upon everything; the meditation practices that enable realization of this Reality as an enlightened awareness of the *shūnyatā* (emptiness) and luminosity or clear light (*’od gsal*) that dwells within all things; a blissful mystical experience of oneness; and the final realization of buddhahood. *Mahāmudrā* teaches that this Reality – this primordial and pristine mind – is all-pervasive and includes the illusory experience of this world and the illusory thoughts concerning it. The experience is of complete oneness. According to the traditional story, the Indian *mahāsiddha* Tilopa (988–1069) tells his disciple and successor-to-be Nāropa (c.1016–1100), “If you want to understand the nature of mind, the *mahāmudrā*, you must realize that there is nobody looking at anything; you must go beyond the idea of somebody looking at something.”¹

Like all Tibetan Buddhism, *mahāmudrā* originated with *mahāsiddhas* (great adepts) from the yogic and tantric milieu that flourished in North India and Nepal from around the eighth to the twelfth centuries. It is most closely associated with the *Kagyü* school, and is traditionally believed to have been introduced into Tibet by Marpa Lotsawa (1012–1097). Marpa received the *mahāmudrā* teachings from Nāropa, who in turn received them from Tilopa. Marpa subsequently transmitted the teachings to his disciple Milarepa (1052–1135), whose disciple Gampopa (1079–1153) organized them into the *Kagyü* school, at the same time merging the *Kadampa* teachings into

Kagyü. Kadampa had been originally introduced into Tibet by the Indian *mahāsiddha* Atisha (982–1054), a contemporary of Marpa.

Mahāmudrā is also taught by the *Shingon* school of Japanese Buddhism, one of Japan’s largest Buddhist schools. *Shingon* arrived in Japan from India by way of China, and is one of the few surviving tantric schools in East Asia. *Shingon* is a rendering of the Chinese *Zhēnyán* (‘Real Word’), itself a translation of the Sanskrit *mantra*. *Shingon* teachings were introduced to Japan when the Buddhist monk Kūkai travelled to China in 804 to study esoteric Buddhism with the monk Huìguō (746–805) in the city of Chang-an (now Xi’an), returning to Japan as Huìguō’s lineage and *dharma* successor.²

Although the term *mahāmudrā* evolved to convey a many-faceted meaning, some of the earliest texts on the subject use it mostly as a term for Reality. It appears this way, for example, in Tilopa’s *Mahāmudrā Instructions* to Nāropa:

Mahāmudrā cannot be taught, Nāropa,
but your devotion to your teacher and the hardships you’ve met
have made you patient in suffering and also wise:
Take this to heart, my worthy student.

For instance, consider space: what depends on what?
Likewise, *Mahāmudrā*: It doesn’t depend on anything.
Don’t control; let go and rest naturally.
Let what binds you go, and freedom is not in doubt. . . .

Mind without projection is *Mahāmudrā*.
Train and develop this and you will come to the deepest awakening.

You don’t see *Mahāmudrā*’s sheer clarity
by means of classical texts or philosophical systems,
whether of the *mantras*, *pāramitās*,
vinaya, *sūtras*, or other collections.

Ambition clouds sheer clarity and you don’t see it.
Thinking about precepts undermines the point of commitment.
Do not think about anything; let all ambition drop.
Let what arises settle by itself, like patterns in water.
No place, no focus, no missing the point –
do not break this commitment: it is the light in the dark.

When you are free from ambition and don’t hold any position,
you will see all that the scriptures teach.
When you open to this, you are free from *saṃsāra*’s prison.
When you settle in this, all evil and distortion burn up.
This is called ‘The Light of the Teaching’

Cut all ties of involvement with country or kin,
 practise alone in forest or mountain retreats.
 Rest, not practising anything:
 when you come to nothing, you come to *Mahāmudrā*.

What joy!
 With the ways of the intellect you won't see beyond intellect.
 With the ways of action you won't know non-action.
 If you want to know what is beyond intellect and action,
 cut your mind at its root and rest in naked awareness.

Let the cloudy waters of thinking settle and clear.
 Let appearances come and go on their own.
 With nothing to change, the world you experience becomes *Mahāmudrā*.
 Because the basis of experience
 has no beginning, patterns and distortions fall away.
 Rest in no beginning, with no self-interest or expectation.
 Let what appears appear on its own and let conceptual ways subside...

You will have a long life, you will not grey,
 and you will shine like the moon.
 You will radiate health and well-being and be as strong as a lion.
 You will quickly attain the ordinary abilities
 and open to the supreme One.
 May these pith (esoteric) instructions, the essentials of *Mahāmudrā*,
 abide in the hearts of all worthy beings.

Tilopa, Mahāmudrā Instructions 2, 11–14, 19, 22–23, 28, PIMT

Originating with the syncretic approach of Gampopa (1079–1153), followed later by Jamgön Kongtrül (1813–1899), the *Kagyü* tradition describes two kinds of *mahāmudrā* teachings. One, *sūtra-mahāmudrā* draws its teachings and practice from the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, especially the *Uttaratantra Shāstra*; the other, *mantra-mahāmudrā*, advocates more characteristically tantric practices, such as *gtum mo* (inner heat), *rmi lam* (dream), and *'od gsal* (clear light). Gampopa taught the simpler meditative absorptions (S. *dhyāna*, Pa. *jhāna*) of the *Mahāyāna* and *Kadampa* paths to his beginner disciples, and the more tantric *mantra-mahāmudrā* to his more advanced disciples. The inclusion of *Mahāyāna* practices as a part of *mahāmudrā* was a matter of significant controversy in the thirteenth century, the debate arising from the possibility that tantric realization of *mahāmudrā* might be attained spontaneously without adequate tantric initiation. It is sometimes said that Gampopa taught a third kind of *mahāmudrā* – essence or heart-essence *mahāmudrā*, which is practised entirely according to the instructions of a suitably qualified and advanced *lama*.

Over the centuries, often in pursuit of clarification and simplicity, *mahāmudrā* teachers of the many lineages have used, borrowed and introduced a wide range of practices and teachings. Many of these are common to the various schools and lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The result is that there is no such thing as a clear set of uniquely *mahāmudrā* teachings and practices. Among these methods are three of the six *dharma*s or *yogas* of Nāropa (*Nā ro'i chos drug*) – a series of meditation techniques transmitted by Tilopa to Nāropa, who passed them on to his disciple Marpa Lotsawa. The three practices are *gtum mo* (inner heat), *rmi lam* (dream), and *'od gsal* (clear light). These techniques involve characteristic tantric practices, including: control of the subtle life force (T. *rlung*, S. *prāṇa*); concentration of the attention at the four *chakras* (eye, throat, heart, and navel); visualization of deities (*yi dam*); recitation of *mantras*, especially *bīja* (seed) *mantras*; and so on. Also included among *mahāmudrā* practices are: a wide range of preliminary practices (*sngon 'gro*); *blo sbyong* (mind training) and the development of the compassionate attitude of mind that seeks enlightenment (*bodhichitta*); *guru yoga*; and so forth. In fact, because the majority of people are so impure, full of much mental and emotional clutter, core *mahāmudrā* practices are normally undertaken only after considerable effort has been expended in preparation.

Between the *Kagyü*, *Geluk* and *Sakya* schools, there are some variations in the teachings and practice of *mahāmudrā*, but all three share the same goal: realization by direct, personal experience of the emptiness (*shūnyatā*) of all phenomena; and realization of Reality as the innate, pristine and luminous essence of the primordial mind, which is the essential and limitless nature (*buddha*-nature) of all sentient beings. Some teachers have emphasized the luminous nature, others the emptiness aspect, others the *buddha*-nature (*buddhadhātu*) aspect; but each is an imperfect way of describing the same Reality. *Mahāmudrā* is similar in content to the *Dzogchen* or *atiyoga* practised by the *Nyingma* school and also by the *Bön* tradition – the indigenous Tibetan religion that became heavily influenced by Buddhism. All of these schools or traditions insist upon the need of a qualified *guru* or *lama*.

Mahāmudrā is generally presented as having three aspects: the root or ground (*gzhi*), the path (*lam*), and the result or fruition (*'bras bu*). The root or ground is the pristine, primordial mind itself, the ground of all existence, things as they really are; the path is the spiritual path, the cultivation of an awareness of this pristine mind through meditation and spiritual practice; and the fruition is enlightenment and complete realization of the pristine mind.

Progress on the path (*lam*) of *mahāmudrā* has also been classified by various teachers. The *mahāmudrā* system is often said, for example, to consist of four phases, stages, or *yogas*:

1. One-pointedness (S. *ekāgra*, T. *rtse gcig*). Quiet and aware mental focus; corresponds to what other Buddhist systems call *samatha* (Pa. tranquillity) or dwelling in peace, but given a tantric flavour. Two forms of *mahāmudrā*

samatha are generally recognized: ‘with support’ and ‘without support’. ‘With support’ entails taking some object as a point of focus and creating an internal mental image of it in the attempt to control the wandering mind. As in many other forms of Buddhist meditation (Pa. *jhāna*, *bhāvanā*), the commonest focus used is breathing. ‘Without support’ refers to meditation on the mind itself, resting within the mind without seeking any external object on which to focus.

2. Non-elaboration (S. *nishprapañcha*, T. *spros bral*). Simplicity, the Truth beyond all conceptual elaboration; corresponds to what other Buddhist systems call *vipassanā* (Pa. insight) or penetrating insight into the way things really are.

Theravāda vipassanā includes a sequence of eighteen reflections or contemplations (*anupassanās*) on various aspects of Buddhist teachings, such as the impermanence of life, the emptiness at the heart of everything, and so on. Wangchuk Dorje (1556–1603), the ninth *Karmapa Lama*, taught a series of ten such *mahāmudrā* contemplations or reflections designed to reveal the nature of the mind. They assume that some degree of stillness and mind control has already been attained through the practice of *samatha* meditation. The first five contemplations are intended to create awareness of (‘looking at’) the various possible states of mind:

- (a) *Looking at the settled mind*. One looks at the state of stillness over and over. When thoughts arise, one returns again and again to contemplate that stillness. One may ask oneself certain questions to provoke awareness, such as, “What is its nature? Is it a thing? Is it perfectly still? Is it completely empty? Is it clear? Is it bright?”
- (b) *Looking at the moving or thinking mind*. One looks at the arising, existence, and disappearance of thoughts. One tries to see a thought as it abruptly appears out of the stillness. One may ask questions such as, “How does it arise? Where does it come from? Where does it dwell? Where does it disappear to? What is its nature?”
- (c) *Looking at the mind reflecting appearances*. One looks at the way in which external appearances – the phenomena of the sense perceptions – occur in experience. Any visual object can be taken as a subject, such as a tree, a mountain, a vase, or whatever may be available. One looks at the object, then looks again, to try to see how it is that appearances arise in the mind. “What is their nature? How do they arise, dwell, and then disappear? Do they arise as already interpreted, or is their initial appearance otherwise?”

(d) *Looking at the mind in relation to the body.* One inspects the relation of mind and body. “What is the mind? What is the body? Is the body just our concept or thought of it? Or is the body our sensations? If the body is sensations, then what relation do these have to our mental image of the body?” One investigates these questions.

(e) *Looking at the settled and moving minds together.* One looks at the stillness of the settled mind and at the thoughts that arise in the moving mind. When the mind is still, one looks at that; when the mind is in motion, one looks at that. One looks to see whether these two modes of the mind are the same or different. If they are the same, “What is that sameness?” If they are different, “What is their difference?”

*Reginald Ray, on Wangchuk Dorje, Ocean of Definitive Meaning,
in SVWR pp.276–77; cf. NKOM*

The second five reflections (‘pointing out’) re-address the same five aspects of mind, now repeatedly focusing on the question, “What is it?” – “What is the mind? What are stillness and movement of the mind?”, and so on. An intellectual answer to these questions is not sought; they are designed to create awareness of one’s own mind and its various states and facets.

3. One taste (S. *samarasa*, T. *ro gcig*). One feeling, same taste; being completely habituated to remaining in a state of non-conceptual awareness; the increasing integration of non-conceptual awareness into one’s life.
4. Non-meditation (S. *abhāvanā*, T. *sgom med*). Without meditation, beyond meditation; the state in which no effort is required to remain continuously in the state of non-conceptual awareness and in which meditation (*bhāvanā*) is no longer essential.

The British Buddhist Tenzin Palmo (Vicki Mackenzie, *b.* 1943) summarizes:

The essence of the practice is just to leave the mind in its natural state. That is very difficult for us to do. We are continually interfering by manufacturing thoughts, feelings, responses, and judgments. We never can just be. We can never just allow the mind to be in its natural state, relaxed and present.

The essence of *mahāmudrā* is to learn how to be simply present in the moment, without creating. When we can do that, then every moment arises fresh and vivid like the first moment. Normally because we see everything through the filter of our memories, judgments, biases, likes and dislikes, everything is actually secondhand and stale.

This is often why we find life very boring and wearisome. We need new excitement, new experiences, something more exciting, more vivid.

But actually if we could just leave the mind quietly present in the moment, open and spacious, then every moment is like the first moment. Everything which happens has a clarity and newness. Then we could never be bored even for one moment.

Tenzin Palmo, Three Teachings, TTTP p.64

See also: **mudrā** (8.4).

1. Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche, *Lifestory of Nāropa, LSN1*.
2. See “Shingon,” “Tangmi,” *Wikipedia*, ret. July 2016.

mahara (Mo) *Lit.* thought, memory, recollection, remembrance, meditation; to remember, to recollect, to bear in mind, to think about, to meditate on; the power of thought and of memory. *Mahara* is incorporated into several other words, including: *māharahara* (to meditate upon, to think about frequently, to have much on one’s mind, to surmise, to suppose; to be anxious or preoccupied; anxiety, worry, apprehension); *pukumahara* (to be cautious, provident, or circumspect); *pūmahara* (thoughtful, wise, learned, sagacious; memories, sagacity, thoughtfulness); *raumahara* (to be perplexed or confused); and *whakamahara* (to remind, a reminder).

Karakia (incantations) and *mahara* are part of the meditation techniques of the *tohunga* (priestly adept), and are used together with a *tokotauwaka*, a notched meditation stick that functions as an *aide-mémoire* to long *karakia* or genealogies. Through the practice of *karakia* and *mahara*, the consciousness is loosened from physical bondage.

The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson quotes a *karakia* (incantation) from the Ngāi Tara tribe (*iwi*), which indicates the power of remembrance of the Divine:

Listen, O son. There was only one spiritual power
that transported *Tāne* to the uppermost realm;
It was the spiritual power of remembrance (*mahara*).
Naught is seen there but *Io* the Parentless –
source of all authority, source of all that is sacred,
source of all heavenly origin, source of all creation.

Ngāi Tara Karakia; cf. in RTHM p.174

According to Elsdon Best (1856–1931), whose primary sources of information came from the Tūhoe tribe of the eastern North Island, human mental functions stem from the gods:

The powers of thought and memory inherent in man were originally derived from the *atua* (gods) of the uppermost of the heavens... When the body of *Hine-ahu-one* (the first woman) was about to be vivified in order to produce the *ira tangata* (mankind), then the mental powers and qualities represented by *rua i te pūkenga* (the power to grasp, adaptability), *rua i te hiringa* (desire for knowledge), *rua i te mahara* (thought, memory), *rua i te wānanga* (lore, wisdom) ... were so obtained and implanted in the hitherto lifeless body of the mother of man. Thus we know that thought, memory, also the desire for and acquirement of knowledge, were deemed to be important matters in the minds of our Polynesian myth builders.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.313

Best also adds:

The Māori tells us, regarding the sojourn of the purified soul in the upper spirit world: “*Ka whakaoti te mahara ki taiao* (all remembrance of this world fades away).”

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.81

See also: **whakawetewete**.

mahāyoga (S), **rnal ’byor chen po** (T) *Lit.* great (*mahā*) union (*yoga*); the first of the three *tantras* or *yogas* and the seventh of the nine-vehicle (*yāna*) classification of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan *Vajrayāna* or tantric Buddhism, the three *tantras* being *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga* (further *yoga*), and *atiyoga* (supreme *yoga*). See **navayāna**.

mantra (S/H), **manta** (Pa), **mantar** (Pu), **sngags** (T), **màndáluó**, **zhēnyán**, **zhòu** (C), **mantara**, **shingon**, **ju** (J) *Lit.* an instrument of thought; a tool for thinking, a mental device; true (*zhēn*) word (*yán*); from the root *man* (to think) and the suffix *-tra* indicating instrumentality; a sacred speech; a short, set prayer or sentence that is constantly repeated; a group of letters, syllables or words recited in a formulaic manner to please or appease some deity; a formula to obtain supernatural powers; an incantation, a magic spell; a sacred word or phrase of spiritual significance; hymns; a hymn, a verse, a prayer or a song of praise to the gods or to the supreme Deity; a formula comprising words and sounds, believed to possess magical or divine power.

In a somewhat fanciful esoteric derivation, it is sometimes said that the suffix *-tra* is derived from *trāṇa* (saving). Understood in this manner, a *mantra* is regarded as that which gives salvation or liberation through the meditation

of the mind. The mental power or energy built up through repetition of a *mantra* is called *mantra shakti*.

Mantras are many and varied, their particular use differing to some extent between individual schools, traditions, and philosophies. *Mantra* also appears in the *Ādi Granth* as a term for the divine creative power, in the sense that it is the divine Word that is truly sacred and whose remembrance truly brings about salvation:¹

This mind does not hold still, even for an instant.
Distracted by all sorts of distractions,
I have found the perfect *guru*, through great good fortune.
He has given me the *Mantra* (*Mantar*) of the Lord's Name,
and my mind has become quiet and tranquil.

Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 170–71, AGK

In Vedic literature, the *Mantras* are those portions that consist of the psalms of praise to the various deities, as distinct from the liturgical prose portions (the *Brāhmaṇas*). Such *Mantras* are also called *Samhitās* – a collection of hymns used in various rites. Individual verses are also known as *mantras*.

Mantras, as formulae for repetition, can be traced back at least as far as Vedic times, and have become an essential aspect of Indian traditions, including Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Perhaps the best known of all such *mantras* is the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.² The *mahāvākyas* (great maxims) of the *Upanishads* are also used extensively as *mantras*. The names of deities, together with words of salutation and honour, are likewise repeated as *mantras*. It is believed that some *mantras* were revealed to the *ṛishis* while they were practising meditation or were composed by them after long meditation.

Every Hindu ritual has its own prescribed formulae appropriate to the occasion, and great stress is laid on the proper recitation and pronunciation of the correct *mantras*, either as verbal formulae or particular verses from Vedic hymns. The efficacy of the rites, it is believed, depends on their correct use, enunciation, and intonation:

(An act) without a *mantra* is no religious act; hence one shall not give up the *mantra*. A religious act done without *mantra* is like oblation offered in ashes.

Nārada-parivṛāja Upanishad 3:8, SUAR p.47

Because they can help to focus the mind, often inducing a sense of peace and happiness, *mantras* are used for a number of purposes – in religious worship and ceremonies, public or personal; in meditation; to invoke the power of a particular deity, either out of a wish for a vision of the deity or for the fulfilment of some particular material desire; and as magic spells and incantations,

usually to fulfil some worldly need or ambition, such as protection from some malign or unwanted influence, the accumulation of wealth, success in some endeavour, recovery from ill-health or the maintenance of good health, or even for the elimination of enemies.

Mantras are deemed to have less value if learnt from a book than from the living voice of a *guru*. It is said that the *mantra* given by a *guru* is not to be repeated aloud, and should not be divulged. *Mantras* that are not spoken aloud, but repeated internally are known as *ajapā* (non-uttered) *mantras*, in contrast to *kaṇṭhika* (throated) *mantras*, which are spoken. Sacrificial *mantras*, prayers and invocations addressed to a deity generally fall into the latter category.

Spiritual seekers who are initiated into the path of God-realization by a master of the divine Word are also given a *mantra* to concentrate the mind. They are advised to keep it secret, to repeat it continuously, whenever they are mentally free, and to practise meditation as instructed. Such a *mantra* is not an end in itself, but a means to concentrate the mind so that it can come into contact with the music of the Word. It is also a means of invoking the presence and power of the inner *guru*, who is the Word itself.

A *mantra* may consist of a single syllable, a word or a group of words, names, or syllables. Many Hindu *mantras* contain the syllable *Aum*, which signifies the creative power of *Brahman*, but has come to be used as a sacred invocation, a means of remembering God, repeated at the beginning and end of any undertaking – spiritual, religious, or worldly. Other examples are:

Om̐kāra. The sound of *Aum*, the syllable *Aum*.

Aum namaḥ Shivāya. *Aum*, salutation to *Shiva*.

Aum namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya. *Aum*, salutation to Lord *Vishṇu*; a *mantra* of ancient orthodoxy, used particularly by *Vaiṣṇavites*. *Vāsudeva* is a name for *Kṛishṇa*, son of *Vasudeva* and an incarnation of *Vishṇu*.

Aum Rādhā Kṛishṇāya Namaḥ. *Aum*, salutations to *Rādhākṛishṇa*; signifies the merging of the devotee *Rādhā* with her beloved *Kṛishṇa*; used particularly by the devotees of *Kṛishṇa*.

Rāma nāma. Name of *Rāma*; name of God.

Aum Tat Sat. *Aum* – that Reality.

Asato mā Sad gamaya. “Lead me from the unreal to the Real.”³

Tat tvam asi. “Thou art That.”⁴

So'ham. I am That.

Ham-sa. Two syllables repeated in rhythm with the breathing.

Ham-sa so-ham. Four syllables repeated in rhythm with the breathing.

Longer *mantras* include the well-loved *Gāyatrī Mantra*, of which all but the first line is from the *Ṛig Veda*:

Aum bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ
tat Savitur vareṇyam.
Bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt.

Aum, let us meditate on the glory of
 that divine Sun (*Savitri*),
 who has created this universe.
 May He enlighten our minds!⁵

Gāyatrī Mantra, Ṛig Veda 3:62.10

There is also the sixteen-word *Hare Kṛishṇa mantra* of the Vaishnavites, first found in the very short *Kalisaṃtaraṇa Upanishad*, and gaining prominence in the fifteenth century as a part of the *bhakti* movement. It has become well-known in recent times as the chant of the followers of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada. *Hare* ('O God') is the vocative form of *Hari* (God):

Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma;
Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
Hare Kṛishṇa, Hare Kṛishṇa;
Kṛishṇa Kṛishṇa, Hare Hare.
Hare Kṛishṇa Mantra, Kalisaṃtaraṇa Upanishad

According to the *Kalisaṃtaraṇa Upanishad*, with the imminent onset of *kaliyuga* ('worst age', age of strife and struggle), Ṛishi Nārada goes to the deity *Brahmā* at the end of the preceding age (*dvāpara-yuga*) and asks how he will survive the evils of *kaliyuga*. *Brahmā* replies:

"That is well asked! Listen to what all the *Shrutis* (i.e. the *Vedas*) keep secret and hidden, and by means of which one may cross the *saṃsāra* (worldly existence) of *kali* (*yuga*). One can rise above the (evil effects of) *kali* by simply uttering the name of the Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, who is the primeval *Purusha* (Being)."

Kalisaṃtaraṇa Upanishad; cf. TMU p.99, KSUK

Nārada asks, “What is that name?” to which *Brahmā* responds by giving him the sixteen-word *mantra*, adding:

“These sixteen names are destructive of the negative effects of *kali-yuga*. No better means (*upāya*) than this can be found in all the *Vedas*. They destroy the sixteen sheaths that act as coverings (*āvaraṇa*) over the *jīva* (unliberated soul in the physical body). Then like the sun that shines forth when the clouds disperse, *Parabrahman* alone shines.”

Nārada asked: “O Lord, what rules (*vidhi*) should be observed regarding it?”

To which *Brahmā* replied, “There are no rules associated with it. Whoever in a pure or impure state continuously utters these names, attains the same world, same proximity to, the same form as, or same absorption into *Brahman*. Whoever repeats this *mantra* composed of sixteen names, thirty-five million times, is purified of the sin of murdering a *brāhmaṇ* or of murdering a hero. He is purified of the sin of stealing gold. He is purified of sexual misconduct. He is purified of the sin of any wrong done to *pitṛis* (ancestors), *devas* (gods), and men. Having abandoned all *dharma*s, he is purified of all sins. He immediately becomes liberated.

Kaliṣaṃtaraṇa Upanishad; cf. TMU pp.99–100, KSUK

Such extravagant claims for *mantras* and other yogic and spiritual practices are common in the ancient literature, and are probably intended to act as encouragement and inspiration to the reader. Short though it may be, the *Kaliṣaṃtaraṇa Upanishad* contains a number of allusions to Upanishadic themes. For instance, the sixteen coverings over the soul that are countered by the sixteen names include *prāṇa* (life energy), the five *tattvas* (primary ‘elements’), *karma*, and so on. The sins mentioned are included among the five *mahāpātakas* (great sins) for which the *Vedas* normally offer no means of redemption. The *dharma*s to be abandoned are the religious practices and penances that are considered the normal means of overcoming the effect of the *mahāpātakas*.

In tantric texts, *mantras* are of such significance that an alternative name for them is *Mantra Shāstra* (*mantra* scriptures), while one of the names for tantric or esoteric Buddhism is *Mantrayāna*. These texts mention a number of syllables used in *mantras* – *hrīm*, *shrīm*, *krīm*, *hūm*, *aīm*, *phaṭ*, etc. – that are entirely phonetic, having no particular etymological meaning. Each deity invoked has its own *mantra*, such as “*Aum*, *hrīm*, *haṃsa*” to invoke *Gāyatrī*; “*hrīm*, *shrīm*, *krīm*” to invoke *Ādyā Kālīkā* (the goddess *Kālī*)⁶, and so on. The full invocation includes various rites and offerings, often complex, accompanied by various additional *mantras*. Monosyllabic *mantras* are known as *bīja-mantras* (seed *mantras*), and a deity’s primary *mantra* is known as its *mūla-mantra* (root *mantra*).

It is believed that the inner meaning or essence of these *mantras* is the *svarūpa* (own form, real form or nature) of the deity,⁷ and tantric texts seek to explain this relationship of the outer, spoken *mantra* to the inner reality. It is said that the divine Word (*Shabda*) or Speech (*Vāk*) of *Brahman* appears first in its *parā* (highest) or most subtle form or manifestation, then as *pashyantī* (one who sees), then as *madhyamā* (middle), and finally as *vaikharī* (speech). At higher levels, above the body, *parā* relates to the causal world. When the *Vāk* in the causal realm begins to ‘move’ – to begin the creative process – it becomes *pashyantī*, thence evolving downwards into *madhyamā* at the subtle or astral level. With further downward evolution, it then becomes *vaikharī* (gross speech) at the external physical level.

These levels of manifestation are understood by tantric and yogic texts to be reflected in the microcosm of the body in the levels of *prāṇa* or *kuṇḍalinī* as it rises up through the *chakras*. *Kuṇḍalinī* or bodily *prāṇa* is the manifestation of the *Vāk*, *Shabda*, *Nāda* or *Aum*, individualized in individual bodies. *Parā* refers to the still or ‘sleeping’ *kuṇḍalinī* in the *mūlādhāra* (basal, rectal) *chakra*. As the *prāṇa* rises from the *mūlādhāra* to the *maṇipūraka* (navel) *chakra*, it is known as *pashyantī*. Some descriptions speak here of the *svādhishṭhāna chakra* (genital centre), rather than the *maṇipūraka chakra*.

As it rises from the navel to the heart centre, the *prāṇa* is called *madhyamā*. *Madhyamā* is related to *buddhi* (intellect, reason), and it is *buddhi* that imbues an external sound or word with meaning. Without meaning being conferred by the intellect, a word is simply a meaningless sound. When this meaning rises to the throat and is expressed as actual speech, it becomes *vaikharī*, which is sound as expressed by the gross physical body. Here, words are uttered whose meaning is understood by the mind. Put another way, this process, either in the macrocosm or in the microcosm of the human body, reflects the stages by which the formless consciousness of the Divine is first manifest in the realm of mental ideas, and then in the world of spoken language. It is the process by which the divine Word is manifest as the physical creation:⁸

A *mantra* is a sound combination and thus represents a physical vibration which is perceptible to the physical ear. But this physical vibration is its outermost expression, and hidden behind the physical vibration and connected with it are subtler vibrations, much in the same way as the dense physical body of man is his outermost expression and is connected with his subtler vehicles. These different aspects of *Vāch* or ‘Speech’ are called *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, *pashyantī*, and *parā*. *Vaikharī* is the audible sound which can lead through the intermediate stages to the subtlest form of *parā-Vāch*. It is really through the agency of these

subtler forms of ‘sound’ that the unfoldment of consciousness takes place and the hidden potentialities become active powers. This release of powers takes a definite course according to the specific nature of the *mantra*, just as a seed grows into a tree, but into a particular kind of tree according to the nature of the seed.

I.K. Taimni, Science of Yoga, SYYP pp.69–70

The first and highest (*parā*) dimension of *Vāk* is transcendent and thus inaccessible; the second is illumined (*pashyantī*, the seeing one), but is still on a transcendental plane; the third, the middle one (*madhyamā*), consists of purely mental articulation; the fourth is the intoned word (*vaikhari*), the external expression of *Vāk*, that is, human language in the usual sense.

Raimundo Panikkar, Vedic Experience, VE p.102

A spoken word or *mantra* is thus understood to be the reflection of a higher reality. In its higher, unspoken aspects, a *mantra* contains the essence of the reality invoked, and this reality can be a particular deity. In fact, the *Yogashikhā Upanishad* says, “There is no *mantra* higher than the *Nāda*,”⁹ the internal source of everything in creation.

The Sufi musician and spiritual master ‘Ināyat Khān puts the matter in simpler terms when he speaks of the intrinsic vibrational value and character of particular words, sounds, and *mantras*:

Every vowel has its psychological significance, and the composition of every word has a chemical and psychological significance. The *yogīs* use special words which they repeat in the morning or in the evening, and by this they reach a certain illumination or come to a certain state of exaltation.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.170

And:

It is on this principle that *mantra yoga* was founded. Words which sprang from the intuition of the *yogīs* and thinkers, words which conveyed the meaning in a most profound manner, such words were collected for the use of the adepts, who repeated them and who profited by repeating them. *Mantra yoga* means a science of words, words which were sacred and helpful in one’s spiritual evolution. The *yogīs* have worked on this principle for many thousands of years, and have discovered a great mystery in the power of words.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK11 pp.90–91

Many yogic and tantric texts recommend the repetition of *mantras*, describing the results to be attained by their repetition, generally for a very large number of times. The actual *mantras* themselves are sometimes given, sometimes not. The *Shiva Saṃhitā*, for instance, speaks of a particular yogic *mantra* and the results of its repetition. But the *mantra* itself is not mentioned, the writer advising that it should be obtained from the *guru*. In this case, the *mantra* described is well known from other tantric and yogic sources to consist of the seed syllables (*bīja*): *Auṃ*, *aiṃ*, *krīm*, *shrīm*:

Now shall I tell you the best practices, the *japa* of *mantra*: from this, one gains happiness in this as well as in the world beyond this.

By knowing this highest of the *mantras*, the *yogī* certainly attains success (*siddhi*): this gives all power and pleasure to the one-pointed *yogī*.

In the four-petalled *mūlādhāra* lotus is the *bīja* of speech, brilliant as lightning (*aiṃ*).

In the heart is the *bīja* of love, beautiful as the *bandhuka* flower (*krīm*). In the space between the two eyebrows (the *ājñā chakra*), is the *bīja* of *Shakti* (*shrīm*), brilliant as tens of millions of moons. These three *bījas* should be kept secret – they give enjoyment and emancipation. Let the *yogī* repeat these three *mantras* and try to attain success.

Let him learn this *mantra* from his *guru*; let him repeat it neither too fast nor too slowly, keeping the mind free from all doubts, and understanding the mystic relation between the letters of the *mantra*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:188–92; cf. SSV pp.83–84

The *yogi* is then advised to perform “one hundred thousand *homas* (fire sacrifices) and “three hundred thousand” repetitions of the *mantra*, one hundred thousand being the Indian measure of one lakh. The text continues:

Having satisfied the *guru* and having received the highest of *mantras*, in the proper way, and performing its repetition in the manner laid down, with mind concentrated, even those who are the most heavily burdened with past *karma* attain success.

The *yogī*, who having controlled his senses, repeats this *mantra* one hundred thousand times, gains the power of attracting others.

By repeating it two hundred thousand times, he can control all persons – they come to him as freely as women go on a pilgrimage. They give him all that they possess, and always remain under his control.

By repeating this *mantra* three hundred thousand times, all the deities presiding over the (heavenly) realms as well as the realms themselves, are brought under his dominion.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:196–99; cf. SSV pp.84–85

And so the text continues, through six, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-eight, thirty, sixty, eighty and one hundred lakh times, the yogi all the while gaining increasing powers:

By repeating this eighteen lakhs of times, he, in this body, can rise from the ground: he attains verily the luminous body (*divyadeha*); he can travel all over the universe, wherever he likes; he sees the tiny pores of the earth (the dance of ‘particles’ comprising matter).

By repeating this twenty-eight lakh times, he becomes the lord of the *vidyādhara*s, the wise *yogī* becomes *kāma-rūpī* (assuming whatever form he desires). By repeating this thirty lakh times, he becomes equal to *Brahmā* and *Vishṇu*. By sixty lakh repetitions, he becomes a *Rudra*; by eighty lakh repetitions, he becomes the all-enjoyer; by one hundred lakh repetitions, the great *yogī* is absorbed in the *parama-Brahman*. Such a practitioner is hardly to be found throughout the three worlds.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:203–4; cf. SSV pp.85–86

The mathematics are probably not intended to be taken literally. Nonetheless, they are entertaining. Assuming one second for each element of the *mantra*, each repetition would take four seconds. One lakh repetitions would thus take about one hundred hours. Assuming the devotion of three hours a day to the practice, the repetition of one lakh would take nearly six weeks. A hundred lakhs would take six hundred weeks or more than a decade.

Allowing that meditation is a lifetime’s pursuit, the figures are not unreasonable – with one provision. If the mind wanders and forgets the *mantra*, more time would be required to complete the course. Since it is the experience of most of those who meditate that the mind hardly remains concentrated for more than a few rounds of a *mantra* before wandering off, a lifetime or more of repetition may be required to reach even the first stage. It should also be added that many yogic texts also stress that the ultimate purpose of *yoga* and the repetition of a *mantra* is the realization of *Brahman*, not the development of supernatural power.¹⁰

There are four ways in which a *mantra* can be repeated: *likhita* (written), *vaikharī* (spoken), *upāṃśhu* (whispered, muttered, mouthed), and *mānasika* (mental). It is said that a *mantra* uttered softly is more efficacious than one repeated loudly; that when its utterance can only be discerned by the movement of the lips, it is a hundredfold more potent; when repeated mentally, its power increases a thousandfold.¹¹ All four types of repetition are, however, essentially *varṇātmak* (H. uttered), as contrasted with the *dhunātmak* (H. of the essence of sound), which refers to the inner sound of the creative power.

In Sikhism, *mantar* can refer to a hymn or *shabd* from the *Ādi Granth*, such as the *Mūl Mantar* of Guru Nānak.¹² *Mantra* is also used in the text itself to refer to the divine Word, the *Shabd*, also known as the *Nām* (Name) of God.

As regards yogic and tantric *mantras*, Guru Nānak says that he is happy with his immersion in the divine Name:

I know nothing of *tantras*, *mantras*, and hypocritical rituals:
 enshrining the Lord within my heart, my mind is satisfied.
 The ointment of *Nām* is only understood by one who realizes the Lord
 through the *guru's* Word (*Sabad*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 766, AGK

Mantras in Jainism

Like Hindu and Buddhist traditions, Jain meditation, worship and religious rites include the recitation of particular *mantras*. In fact, the use of *mantras* was significantly influenced by their use in Hindu rites, a trend given impetus by the emphasis on *mantras* provided by the ninth-century Jain *āchārya*, Jinasena.¹³

Probably the most frequently repeated Jain *mantra* is the *namaskāra mantra*, more commonly known by its Prakrit title of *namokār mantra*. This *mantra* is an ancient Prakrit sacred formula used as a prayer of homage, obeisance and salutation to the five classes of great beings (*pañcha-parameshṭhins*) who are deemed worthy of worship. The five classes are: Jain *arahantas* (enlightened ones); *siddhas* (perfected, liberated ones); *āchāryas* (mendicant leaders); *upādhyāyas* (teachers, preceptors); and *sādhus* (mendicants). Jain belief and practice encompasses the reverence of holy men of all degrees, as encapsulated in this *mantra*. The intention behind its recitation is to imbibe their virtues by dwelling upon them while repeating the prayer in an attitude of worshipful devotion:

Homage to the *arahantas*,
 homage to the *siddhas*,
 homage to the *āchāryas*,
 homage to the *upādhyāyas*,
 homage to all *sādhus* in the world.
 This is the fivefold salutation that destroys all sins.
 Among all that is auspicious,
 it is pre-eminently auspicious.

Namo arahantāṇaṃ,
namo siddhāṇaṃ,
namo āyāriyāṇaṃ,
namo uvajjhāyāṇaṃ,
namo loe savva-sāhūṇaṃ.

Eso pañcha namokkāro savva-pāvappanāsaṇo,
mangalāṇaṃ cha savvesiṃ paḍhamaṃ havai mangalam.

Jain Namaskāra Mantra

According to Jain belief, recitation of the *namaskāra mantra*, also called the *pañcha-namaskāra*, grants protection, fulfils worldly desires and ambitions, cures disease, and destroys *karma*. It is supposed to be repeated at least on rising in the morning and before sleep at night. Often it is recited before beginning any undertaking. It is also used in meditation, either orally or mentally, as well as in daily life to hold the mind in check and ward off anger, lust, and other negative mental traits. Sometimes, the attempt is made to repeat the *mantra* at all times of the day, whenever possible. Minor variations exist between some *Shvetāmbara* groups, and *Sthānakavāsīs* do not accept the last sentence.

The syllable *Auṃ* is also prevalent as a *mantra* or sacred formula in Jainism, its three letters being associated alphabetically with the five *parameshṭhins* – ‘A’ with *arahantas* and liberated souls (*ātman*, *siddhas*), ‘U’ with *upādhyāyas*, and ‘M’ with *munis* (*sādhus*).

Mantras are used in both external (*dravya*) and internal (*i.e.* mental) worship (*bhāva pūjā*), and may also be repeated while practising the *sāmāyika-vrata* (vow of equanimity), which is the third of the four vows of religious discipline (*shikshā-vratas*). *Sāmāyika-vrata* is the avoidance of all harmful actions, and the quest for peace of mind by remaining in meditation, repeating a *mantra*, studying the scriptures, or listening to a religious discourse for a period of one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes). *Mantras* are also used as an aid to concentration in *prekshā-dhyāna*, a meditation practice introduced by Acharya Mahapragya during the 1970s.

Mantras in Buddhism

Among the many regional Buddhist traditions, a large number of *mantras* in various languages – some long, some short – are used for both meditational and liturgical purposes. The meaning of *mantra* is traditionally understood to be that which ‘protects (*tra*) the mind (*man*)’, although etymology renders it as ‘instrument of thought’.

Probably the best known among such *mantras* is the Sanskrit *mantra*, *Auṃ maṇi padme hūṃ* (*Auṃ*, homage to the jewel in the lotus), attributed to Avalokiteshvara, the celestial *bodhisattva* of compassion. This *mantra* is regarded as especially sacred by the devotees of the Dalai Lama, who is considered an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. Although other interpretations are also given, the jewel is normally believed to signify the treasure of enlightenment hidden in the ‘lotus’ of the human mind. Another common explanation suggests that the six syllables represent the six realms of *saṃsāra* in which rebirth can take place – the realms of human beings, gods (*devas*), demons (*asuras*), hungry ghosts (*pretas*, distressed ancestors), hellish beings, and animals. *Auṃ* on its own is also used as a *mantra*, and the uplifting sound of a congregation of Buddhist monks intoning the single syllable can be a deeply moving experience.

In tantric Buddhism, also known as *Mantrayāna* (the *mantra* vehicle) and *Vajrayāna*, which espouses many beliefs reflecting its origins in Indian tantrism, both single syllable (*bīja*) and lengthy *mantras* are believed to embody the qualities of the deities they represent, or to be expressions of enlightenment itself. *Mantras* are hence used in rites intended to invoke the power of deities, and in visualization and meditation practices.

Mantras (C. *zhēnyán*) form an integral part of Chinese esoteric Buddhism known as (*Zhēnyán Zōng*), which was later introduced to Japan where it became known as *Shingon*. *Zhēnyán* is also a name for this style of Chinese Buddhist meditation. *Zhēnyán* and *shingon* (true words) are general terms used for *mantras*, *bīja-mantras*, and *dhāraṇīs*.

Like all tantric or esoteric traditions, the practices include the use of *mantras*, *maṇḍalas*, *mudrās* and visualizations under the guidance of a master, following initiation (*abhisheka*). Since there are claims that such practices lead to liberation and enlightenment in the present life, without the discipline of monastic life and the study of scriptures, they have become popular among the laity.

See also: **ajapā gāyatrī, dhyāna, Gāyatrī Mantra** (8.4), **Mantra** (►1).

1. E.g. see also Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 188, 864, 1077.
2. *Ṛig Veda* 3:62.10.
3. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1:3.28.
4. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 6:8.7.
5. See also *Yajur Veda* 36:3, *Sāma Veda* 6:3.10.
6. *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* 5:54, 68.
7. John Woodroffe, *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, *MTTL*.
8. See John Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, *SSEC* pp.468–89.
9. *Yogashikhā Upanishad* 2:20, *YU* p.365.
10. See **siddhi** (7.3).
11. *Agni Purāṇa* 293:28, *APG3* p.805.
12. Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 1.
13. Jinasena, *Ādi Purāṇa* 38:75.

mantra yoga (S/H/Pu) A system of *yoga* whose devotees repeat certain *mantras* (verbal formulae). Such *mantras* may be chanted, spoken audibly, muttered or silently articulated with the lips, or repeated silently in the mind. They may be repeated in solitude or in groups. Repetition is also called *japa*.

By confining the mind to a single thought or refrain, some degree of concentration is achieved, leading to peace and joy. By constant mental repetition, with the attention fixed upon particular centres or *chakras*, the practitioner gains mental energy, and even psychic and miraculous powers.

The motivation of the practitioner, the spiritual attainment of the one who gives the *mantra*, the particular *mantra* repeated, and the centre at which the attention is focused during repetition of the *mantra* will all have a part to play in determining the results.

See also: **japa, mantra.**

maraṇasati, maraṇānussati (Pa) *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati, anussati*) of death (*maraṇa*); recollection of death; a meditation exercise on death; the seventh of the ten recollections (*anussati*) listed among the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the Pali *suttas*), the *sutta* commentaries, and associated literature.

Death, it is observed, is inevitable and can come at any time, from a variety of causes. The purpose of the meditation on this reality is to encourage greater effort at inner concentration and contemplation, with purification, perfection, and the deathless state of *nibbāna* as the ultimate goal. According to the *Maraṇasati Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*:¹

Recollection of death (*maraṇasati*), developed and cultivated, yields great reward, great blessing, culminating in the deathless (*amata*), having the deathless as its consummation. But how may such recollection be developed?

Here, *bhikkhus* (monks), as soon as day departs and night falls, a *bhikkhu* should reflect: “Truly, there are many ways that I could die: I may be bitten by a serpent or stung by a scorpion or a centipede, and I may thereby lose my life – that would be an obstacle for me. Or I may stumble and fall down; or my food may disagree with me; or my bile, phlegm and sharp body gases may become agitated; or men or ghosts may attack me, and thus I may lose my life – that, too, would be an obstacle for me.”

Then the *bhikkhu* should reflect: “Are there still to be found in me unsubdued evil and unwholesome things (*pāpaka akusalā-dhammā*), which, if I should die today or tonight, would be an obstacle for me?”

Now if, upon review, he realizes that this is the case, he should use his utmost resolution, effort, zeal, diligence, endeavour, undivided mindfulness and clear-mindedness in order to overcome these evil and unwholesome things – just as one whose clothes or head have caught fire will put forth utmost resolution, effort, . . . *etc.*, to extinguish the fire on his clothes or head.

But if, upon review, the *bhikkhu* realizes: “I do not have any evil and unwholesome qualities that have not been given up, which might become an obstacle for me were I to die tonight” – then he should

dwell in that same rapture (*pīti*) and joy (*pāmojja*), training himself day and night in wholesome qualities.

Anguttara Nikāya 8:74, *Maraṇasati Sutta*, PTSA4 pp.320–21;
cf. NDBB p.1222, PDB pp.186–87

The same is then repeated for “as soon as night departs and the day returns”.

In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa elaborates on this theme in his characteristic manner:

He who wants to develop this mindfulness should go into solitary retreat and, while living secluded, should wisely reflect in this way: “Death will come to me! The vital energy will come to an end!” Or, “Death! Death! (*Maraṇa! Maraṇa!*).” To him who does not wisely reflect in such a manner, sorrow may arise when recalling the death of a beloved person, like a mother who recalls the death of her beloved child. Again, by recalling the death of a disagreeable person, happiness may arise, like enemies who recall the death of their enemies. Through recalling the death of a person to whom one is indifferent, however, no emotion will arise, like the reaction to the sight of a dead body of a man whose work consists of cremating the dead. And by reflecting on one’s own death, fear may arise, just as at the sight of a murderer with a drawn sword, one becomes filled with horror.

In all that, there is neither mindfulness, nor sense of urgency, nor wisdom. So whenever, here or there, he sees slain or other dead beings, he should reflect on the death of such deceased persons who once lived in happiness, doing so with mindfulness, with a sense of urgency and with wisdom, reflecting thus: “Death will come, . . . *etc.*” Only in him who meditates in this way will the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) be suppressed; and through mindfulness of death, the attention becomes steadfast, and the exercise reaches threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:4–7, PTVS p.230;
cf. PBD pp.187–88; cf. PPVM p.226

Nyanatiloka Mahāthera (1878–1957) describes eight ways in which a person can meditate on death:

One may think of it as a murderer with a drawn sword standing in front of oneself; or one may bear in mind that all happiness ends in death; or that even the mightiest beings on this earth are subject to death; or that we must share this body with all those innumerable worms and other tiny beings residing therein; or that life is something dependent on in-and-out breathing, and bound up with it; or that life continues

only as long as the elements, food, breath, *etc.* are properly performing their functions; or that nobody knows when, where, and under what circumstances, death will take place, and what kind of fate we have to expect after death; or, that life is very short and limited.

Nyanatiloka, "marāṇussati," Pali Buddhist Dictionary, PBD p.188

Nyanatiloka's list of eight ways to meditate on death is based upon the *Visuddhimagga*.² Buddhaghosa adds that just as a murderer appears with a sword, intending to cut off a man's head, so does death arrive at birth, destined to take away life. Just as new toadstools grow up from the ground with dirt on their tops, so are aging and death automatic companions to life. Just as the risen sun moves towards its setting, as mountain torrents never turn back, as rivulets dry in the summer sun, as fruit falls from fruit trees, as clay pots shatter when hit by a mallet – so does life march inevitably towards death.

Likewise, he continues, even the greatest of successes and the life of the most powerful of men are sooner or later ended by death. "All health ends in sickness, all youth in aging, all life in death; all worldly existence is initiated by birth, haunted by aging, surprised by sickness, and struck down by death."

Again, death comes to everyone, whoever they may be – the rich and famous, the meritorious, the strong, those of supernatural power, the wise, *pacceka-buddhas* (non-teaching, privately enlightened *buddhas*), and fully enlightened *buddhas*. Here, Buddhaghosa adds various examples of those who have been born and have died. Comparing oneself to these, he says, will lead to the realization that all who live will die, whoever they may be.

The body, he goes on, is also shared with so many "worms" and other small creatures that live off the skin and the internal bodily organs:

And there they are born, grow old and die, evacuate and make water; and the body is their maternity home, their hospital, their charnel ground, their privy, and their urinal. The body can also come to die through the disturbance of these worms. And just as the body is shared with the eighty families of worms, so too it is shared by several hundred internal diseases.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:25, PTSV p.231; cf. PPVM p.231

"This," he observes, "is how death should be recollected as to sharing the body with many others." Death, he continues, referring to the *Marāṇasati Sutta*, can come in many ways, for life is frail and depends upon the maintenance of a balance between many factors. Life only exists while the in- and out-breaths continue; while none of the four postures of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down predominate; while heat and cold remain in balance; while the four elements (*mahābhūtas*) remain in balance; and while food is

regularly available. These, he advises, are topics for reflection when meditating upon death.

Then, there is no fixed span of life that everyone can expect. Death can come to an embryo or an infant. Nor is there just one sickness of which all will die, nor one time of day at which all will expire, nor any fixed place where life will end, nor any law of destiny such that a person born at one particular place will die at another particular place. Everything is uncertain. In any event, life is of short duration, even if lived for a hundred years. Here, Buddhaghosa refers to the *Araka Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*:

Short, indeed, is human life. . . . Just as a water bubble, . . . a line drawn on water with a stick, . . . or a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass will quickly vanish at sunrise and will not last long; . . . or as a river flowing down from a mountain, going a long distance, with a swift current, carrying along much flotsam, will not stand still for a moment, an instant, a second, but will rush on, swirl and flow forward, so too is human life like a mountain stream; . . . just as, when a cow to be slaughtered is being led to the slaughterhouse, whatever leg she lifts brings her closer to slaughter, closer to death, so too is human life like a cow doomed to slaughter. It is limited and fleeting; it has much suffering, much misery. One should wisely understand this. One should do what is wholesome and lead the spiritual life; for none who are born can escape death.

Anguttara Nikāya 7:74, *Araka Sutta*, PTSA4 pp.136–38; cf. NDBB pp.1096–97

Lastly, Buddhaghosa points out that in regard to the individual experience of living, life is but “a single conscious moment”. It is, he says, like a cart wheel. Whether revolving or stationary it only ever touches the ground at a single point. That is the “single conscious moment” of an individual life, caught up in the wheel of transmigration.

Buddhaghosa then concludes that mindfulness of death, practised by reflection upon any of these topics, can, through constant repetition and reiterated focusing of the attention, bring about suppression of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), promote the appearance of the essential mental factors (*jhānangas*) necessary for entry into the *jhānas*, and lead to the attainment of threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). But since the nature of the meditation involves numerous thoughts, and since these are involved with the individual, and since such meditation induces a state of urgency in the mind, concentration cannot go further and enter the fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) of the first *jhāna*. He then summarizes:

A *bhikkhu* devoted to mindfulness of death (*marāṇasati*) is constantly diligent, becomes disenchanted with all forms of existence, conquers attachment to life, detests evil, does not hoard things, and is free

from stinginess regarding the necessities of life. The awareness of impermanence (*anicca*) grows in him, following which an awareness of suffering (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anattā*) awaken in him. . . . Free from fear and confusion will he pass away at death; . . . and should he have not yet realized the deathless state during his lifetime, at the dissolution of the body, he will at least be bound for a happy destination.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:41, PTSV p.239; cf. PPVM p.236

See also: **anussati, maraṇa** (8.3).

1. See also *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:19–20, 8:73, *Maraṇasati Sutta*, *PTSA3* pp.303–8, 317–19, *NDBB* pp.876–80, 1219–21.
2. *Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:8–41, PTSV pp.230–39; cf. PPVM pp.226–36.*

mathematics (Gk. *mathēma*, knowledge) In Pythagoreanism, Plato and Neoplatonism, esoteric and mystical knowledge; a term closely associated with the Greek concept of substantial number (*ousiōdēs arithmos*), which was used to describe how the divine One becomes the multiplicity of creation, both in this world and the higher spiritual realms.

Along with astronomy and harmonics, mathematics was a core element of the Pythagorean system.¹ The image of Pythagoras as a mathematical philosopher was transmitted to posterity by Plato, although the accuracy of this image is in doubt.² Nonetheless, the name *mathēmatikoi* (those possessing knowledge) was attached to one of the two main schools that developed after the death of Pythagoras, in order to distinguish them from the *akousmatikoi* (hearers), those who emphasized ritualistic practices and taboos.

For the Neoplatonist Iamblichus (C3rd–4th) the study of mathematics was practically a religious experience. He writes, “If we wish to study mathematics in a Pythagorean manner, we ought to pursue zealously its God-inspired, anagogic (upward leading), cathartic, and initiatory process.”³ According to Iamblichus, the mathematical mysteries (*mathēmatikoi orgiasmoi*) of the Pythagoreans, combined with “beneficial and divine teachings”, purify the mind, so that “it neither greatly fears removal from the body, nor when led to things incorporeal, has its eyes turned away because of their brilliant splendour, nor turns to those emotions nailing and fastening the soul to the body.”⁴ Proclus, a fifth-century Neoplatonist, reports that the Pythagoreans made use of mathematics “for the recollection of divine principles” and “consecrated numbers and geometric shapes to the gods”.⁵ It may be inferred that the geometric figures of the gods functioned as contemplative icons, perhaps like the geometric *maṇḍalas* of yogic disciplines.⁶

For Proclus, mathematics opened the inner eye by purifying the “eye of the soul” and awakened the soul’s innate remembrance of its origins.

Mathematics, he says, “arouses our innate knowledge, awakens our thinking, purges our understanding, brings to light the concepts that belong essentially to us, and takes away the forgetfulness and ignorance that we have from birth”.⁷

The importance of mathematics in Plato’s dialogues, especially the *Timaeus*⁸ is undisputed. In the *Timaeus*, the *Demiourgos* creates the world soul out of geometric, harmonic, and arithmetic proportions. The entire passage on creation is based on the *tetraktys*, the Pythagorean symbol of cosmogenesis. Mathematics was central to the educational programme of the Platonists, its role being to develop the mind (*dianoia*) and make it fit for *noēsis* (intuitive knowledge).⁹ Plato associated dialectic, as a method for the soul’s ascent, with mathematics.¹⁰ For Plato, the mastery of both mathematics and philosophy was needed to attain vision of the Divine.¹¹

Therefore, in later Neoplatonism, mathematical theurgy (practices for union with the Divine) was used to transform the soul, not to teach it. This could happen because the soul itself was conceived as a mathematical reality:

We think the soul exists in ratios common with all mathematical, possessing, on the one hand, the power of discerning them, and on the other hand, the power of generating and producing the incorporeal measures themselves; and with these measures the soul has the capacity to fit together the generation and completion of forms in matter by means of images, proceeding from the invisible to the visible, and joining together the things outside with those inside. In view of all this, in brief, the definition of the soul contains in itself the sum total of mathematical reality.

Iamblichus, De Communi Mathematicā 41:24–42 in TSNI p.193

It was believed that souls involved in spiritual practices (noetic souls)

were united with the immaterial *Nous* through mathematical *synthēmata* (receptacles). This form of theurgy might initially have been a discursive exercise: mathematical visualizations which at a certain point would spontaneously manifest as mental images, like a *nimitta* in *Theravāda* Buddhist meditation, understood as visions empowered by the gods. This lifted the soul’s discursive energies into the numbers of the heavens described in the *Timaeus*, and the soul surrendered its false ‘unity’ to the unifying action of the One.

Gregory Shaw, Theurgy and the Soul, TSNI p.208

Plato’s *Timaeus* represents the soul as a mathematical entity and its immortal vehicle (*ochēma*) was also designed according to mathematical ratios.

For Iamblichus, the mathematical images are living *logoi* (expressions) of the *Nous*.¹²

According to Iamblichus, mathematical exercises produce a remembrance (*anamnēsis*) in the soul of things it previously knew:

The soul is raised up to the objects of knowledge from without and while it receives from things other (than itself) the beginning of its recollection (*anamnēsis*), it projects this beginning from itself.

Iamblichus, De Communi Mathematicā 43:19, in TSNI p.194

For the Neoplatonists, mathematics was not a theoretical or abstract discipline, but constituted a regime of spiritual practice that can only be guessed at today. It may have included visualization, self-recollection, going beyond the realm of thought, and so on:

Mathematical *askēsis* (practice) is aimed at the refinement of thought and purification of knowledge, affording human beings an inner peace and harmony with the larger universe and leading finally to the apprehension of true reality.

Iamblichus, De Communi Mathematicā 22, ICMS p.69, in RNNT pp.138–39

See also: **nimitta**.

1. Plato, *Republic* 7:530d, in *PPBH* p.13.
2. C.H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, *PPBH* p.14.
3. Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematicā* 69:26–29, in *TSNI* p.195.
4. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 32:228, *IPWL* pp.222–25.
5. Proclus, *Platonic Theology* 4:102.4–5, *PTPI* pp.20–21, in *TSNI* p.201.
6. G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, *TSNI* pp.201, 203.
7. Proclus, *In Euclid* 15:46–47, *PCEE* pp.37–38.
8. Plato, *Timaeus* 35b ff.
9. Plato, *Republic* 5:510b–e.
10. Plato, *Republic* 7:522c, *Statesman* 258d–260b, *Philebus* 55e–56e; see A.W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, *STCG* p.109.
11. See A.W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, *STCG* p.185.
12. Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematicā* 34–36, 43–44, in *TSNI* p.195.

meditation (Daoism) Although there are forms of Daoist meditation that involve standing, walking and lying down, Daoist meditation in general involves seated positions, so is most often referred to in Chinese as *dǎzuò* (to engage in sitting).

In respect of Daoism, the English word ‘meditation’ is an umbrella term covering various practices, including inner alchemy (*nèidān*), concentration, devotion, intentional focus on breathing, mindfulness, relaxation, visualization, and so on. These diverse forms of meditation may be broadly categorized as follows:¹

Quietistic meditation. Contentless, non-conceptual and non-dualistic meditation, emphasizing the stilling of the mind (*xīn*), emptying it of all intellectual and emotional activity; sometimes referred to as apophatic meditation (*i.e.* beyond words). The purpose is to recover a state of true stillness and emptiness. This represents a reconnection, a mystical union with the *Dào*, because this state of stillness is in fact one’s innate nature, which is the *Dào*. This kind of meditation was first practised and advocated by members of the inner cultivation lineages² of classical Daoism (480 BCE – 9 CE), for whom it was the primary mode of meditation. Associated with quietistic meditation are terms such as *bàoyī* (embracing the One), *shǒuyī* (guarding the One), *xīnzhāi* (fasting the mind), *zuòwàng* (sitting in oblivion), and *jìngzuò* (quiet sitting). See *bàoyī* (8.1), *dǎzuò*, *jìngzuò*, *shǒuyī*, *xīnzhāi*, *zuòwàng*.

Inner alchemy (nèidān). Meditation modelled (metaphorically) on alchemical processes, usually involving sequential stage-by-stage practices aimed at physiological and energetic self-transformation and physical longevity and/or spiritual immortality. Specific methods for women were developed, called *nǚdān* (female alchemy). See *nèidān*.

Visualization (cún, cúnxiǎng). Meditation involving the conscious act of concentration and focused attention designed to cause specific objects of contemplation to appear before the mind’s eye, such as deities, scriptures, constellations or colours, or to cause specific energies to manifest in particular parts of the body. See *cún*.

Inner contemplation (nèiguān). A form of meditation adapted from Buddhist insight meditation (Pa. *vipassanā*, S. *vipashyanā*), which involves exploration and observation of the body as an internal landscape. See *nèiguān*.

Ingestion of qì (fúqì). A form of meditation involving the ingestion (*fú*) of outer and inner *qì* (subtle life energy) for prophylactic and therapeutic functions and benefits. See *fúqì*.

1. See Louis Komjathy, *Daoist Tradition*, DTK pp.205–6.
2. A name proposed by Harold Roth (Brown University, USA) for the earliest master-disciple communities of classical Daoism.

meditation (L. *meditatio*) Consideration or contemplation of something; deliberation or thinking about something; spiritually, a generic term for any of a wide variety of inner practices of mental concentration, contemplation and devotion intended to focus the mind and raise awareness or expand consciousness; spiritual practice; from the Latin *meditatio*, related to the verb *meditari* (to reflect on, to meditate, to exercise oneself in, to practise something).

Being concerned with the inner condition of the human mind and soul, meditational practices have existed at all times and in all cultures and religions. They are a natural, if not essential, aspect of the inner human constitution, and may or may not be associated with particular religious beliefs or a particular philosophical outlook. The aims of the various practices can include: attainment of inner quiet and a peaceful mind; development of the inner strength required to face the vagaries of life with equanimity; preparation for particular events as with a musician, actor or dancer before a performance, or a warrior before battle; expansion of consciousness into spiritual realms or dimensions; development of miraculous powers; withdrawal of the mind and soul from the body, and development of the ability to go through the process of death before actually dying, in the sense of withdrawal of the consciousness from the body and entry into the higher realms of consciousness that are normally experienced only after death; development of human virtues and the love of God; self-realization; God-realization; and so on. Medical research has also shown that skilled practitioners are able to control their respiration and pulse rates, and positively influence other aspects of body function.

All the world's major religions have developed meditational or contemplative techniques. Hinduism has its many forms of *yoga*; the Indian *sant* tradition insists on the remembrance of the Name of God; the various schools of Buddhism have developed the practice of contemplation (S. *dhyāna*, Pa. *jhāna*), known as *chán* in China, and *zen* in Japan; Islam has the various forms of Sufi *dhikr* (repetition, remembrance); the ancient mystery schools of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome had their esoteric practices, revealed only to initiates; and the shamans of indigenous peoples have sought answers to the mysteries of life within themselves in various inner practices.

In Judaism, meditation is described not only in the literature of the *merkavah* (chariot) mystics of antiquity, among the Essenes of ancient times, and in the Kabbalah, but also in the devotional *Psalms*, which – in what must be veiled references to meditation and interior prayer – speak in a number of places of communing in the night with *Yahweh*.¹

Know this, *Yahweh* works wonders for those He loves:

Yahweh hears me when I call to Him.

Stand in awe, and sin not:

spend the night in your meditation, and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in *Yahweh*.

Psalms 4:3–5; cf. JB, KJV

Meditation was also taught and practised among the Greek mystics, including Pythagoras, Socratēs and the writers of the Hermetic literature. Later Pythagoreans were expected to undertake a daily examination of conscience, which had to be done zealously before retiring to bed. The fifth-century (CE) Pythagorean Hieroclē̄s counsels:

Never allow sleep to close your eyes after going to bed until you have examined your conscience concerning all your actions that day. What have I done amiss? What deeds have I performed? What have I omitted that I ought to have done? If, in this examination, you find that you have done amiss, reprimand yourself severely for it; and if you have done any good, rejoice. Work hard at this; meditate on it assiduously: you should be passionate about it. It is this that will put you on the path of divine virtue.

Hieroclē̄s, Golden Verses of Pythagoras 40–46; cf. HVP pp.86, 90

The memorization of short wisdom verses and their frequent mental repetition was also part of Pythagorean meditative practice.

In a reference to Plato's famous comparison of the fallen soul of a human being to a winged charioteer who has lost his feathers,² Hieroclē̄s also observes:

What contributes most to the growth of these wings is meditation (*meletē*), by which we learn, little by little, to wean our affections from earthly things, and to acquire the habit of contemplating things that are immaterial and spiritual, and to shake off the pollutions the soul has contracted by its union with the terrestrial and mortal body.

Hieroclē̄s, Golden Verses of Pythagoras 67–69; cf. HVP p.123

Empedoclē̄s (490–430 BCE) who had studied for some time with the Pythagoreans, addresses his composition *On Nature*, to a disciple, Pausanias,³ urging him to internalize, practise and make the teachings a part of his innermost nature. He should refrain from cluttering his mind with trivial things:

If you plant them (spiritual teachings) firmly in your understanding, and contemplate them wholeheartedly in pure meditative exercises (*meletē*), assuredly they will accompany you throughout your life, and you will gain many other things from them. On their own, they will grow into many good habits, according to each person's nature. But if you seek things of a different kind, such as occur in their thousands among men – evils that blunt people's thoughts – then, with the passage of time, these teachings will abandon you, longing to find their

own dear kind; for know that all things have intelligence (*phronēsis*) and a share of thought (*nous*).

Empedoclēs, Fragment B110, in DK1 p.352

Stillness (*hēsychia*), as a meditative practice, was also of significance among the Pythagoreans. It is said that the philosopher Parmenidēs (b.c.515 BCE) learned from his teacher, the Pythagorean Ameinias, the secret of curbing the restlessness of his mind through stillness.⁴ The philosopher Anaxagoras (500–428 BCE) believed that his insight concerning the transcendental power of *Nous* (Spirit) arose from his association with the legendary Hermotinos of Clazomenae, who was noted for leaving his body during meditation, and lying inert like a corpse. Aristotle associates Anaxagoras with Hermotinos since both came from the same town.⁵ Some Pythagoreans and others in the ancient world passed extended periods of time in stillness in underground chambers seeking divine wisdom and supernatural power.⁶

Socratēs, too, practised regular meditation, which he continued even while on military campaign, when discharging his military service. On one occasion, to the amazement of all his fellow soldiers, he was reported to have remained standing motionless for twenty-four hours, from dawn to dawn.⁷ It was his custom to remain standing motionless in meditation for long periods of time. When invited to a dinner party, he is reported to have been found standing on a neighbour's porch, where he remained until halfway through dinner.⁸

In Roman times, the Stoics prescribed contemplation upon exemplary individuals, present and past, as a meditative practice. They also practised mindfulness (*prosochē*), consisting of continuous mental vigilance and focus, so that they were ready for all events of life, good or bad. The Stoics especially stressed the need for the daily and regular practice of meditation. A particular time was to be set aside for meditation, when particular phrases or images were to be used, and a particular method employed. The words used to describe their practice were those used in the rigorous training (Gk. *gymnazō*, *meletaō*, *askeō*; L. *exerceo*) of athletes. These terms implied that the exercises were to be performed daily, ideally at the same time. All Stoic sources stress the need for daily *meditatio* (meditation),⁹ the words 'daily' and 'regular' appearing in practically all exhortations to meditation.¹⁰

Many of the written works of the Stoics, whether Seneca's letters or the dialogues in the discourses of Epictetus, were specifically designated as meditation.¹¹ The reader who is unaware that these writings served the purposes of *meditatio* may be struck by their repetitiveness or by their constant hammering on the same subject using different words and examples. The goal was not to convey information, but to ingrain or implant a certain mental attitude into the mind. Seneca depicts the process as being like dyeing wool:

It is like wool that takes up certain colours at once, while other colours are only absorbed when the wool has been soaked and steeped in them many times. In the same way, some doctrinal systems can be immediately applied by men's minds after having been accepted, but the system of which I speak, unless it has gone deep and has sunk in for a long time, and has not merely coloured but thoroughly permeated the soul, will not fulfil any of its promises.

Seneca, Epistles 71:31; cf. SEP2 pp.92–93

The modern scholar Pierre Hadot observes that in the ancient world, “the exercise of meditation was an attempt to control inner discourse in an effort to render it coherent. The goal was to arrange it around a simple, universal principle: the distinction between what does and does not depend on us.”¹² This repeated focus upon what is the nature of the true self and what is external to it (the subject of many of Plato's dialogues) prepared the practitioner for knowledge of self and the Divine. The underlying intention was complete inner transformation:

Philosophy is divided into knowledge and state of mind. For one who has learned and understood what he should do and avoid, is not a wise man until his mind is completely transformed into the form of that which he has learned.

Seneca, Epistles 94:48; cf. SEP3 pp.42–43

Even though Marcus Aurelius wrote an inspirational diary, ‘thoughts to himself’ entitled *Meditations*, he put philosophical action and practice before philosophical writing. This was in conformity with the teachings of one of his teachers, Rusticus:

From Rusticus, I became aware that my character required improvement and discipline; and from him I learned not to be led astray into sophistic emulation, nor to writing on speculative matters, nor to exhibiting myself as a man who practises much discipline, nor to make a display of benevolent acts.

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 1:7; cf. MMAA p.5

A passage from a twentieth-century Indian Sufi, ‘Ināyat Khān, speaks of five essential aspects to the development of the inner life that are common to all mystical traditions. These five are mastery of the mind, seeking a spiritual guide, receiving inner mystical knowledge, living a decent moral life, and meditation:¹³

The fourth grade of attainment of the inner life is meditation. If one has unlearned all that one has learned, if one has a teacher, and if one

has received the knowledge of the inner life, still meditation is a thing which is most necessary, which in the Sufi words is called *riyāzat* (spiritual discipline). In the first place, meditation is done mechanically, at an hour which one has fixed upon as the hour for devotion or concentration. The next step is to think of that idea of meditation at other times during the day. And the third stage is continuing meditation throughout the day and night. Then one has attained to the right meditation. If a person does meditation only for fifteen minutes in the evening, and then forgets altogether about it all day, he does the same thing as going to church on Sunday and the other days of the week forgetting all about it.

Intellectual training no doubt has its use in the achievement of the inner life, but the principal thing is meditation. That is the real training. The study of one year and the meditation of one day are equal. By this meditation is meant the right kind of meditation. If a person closes his eyes and sits doing nothing, he may just as well go to sleep. Meditation is not only an exercise to be practised; in meditation the soul is charged with new light and life, with inspiration and vigour; in meditation there is every kind of blessing.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK1 p.96

In Christianity, the known history of meditation began with the desert fathers, from whom evolved the monastic tradition. The monasteries of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches were originally intended as a refuge from the world so that the members of the community could focus without distraction upon the inner life of contemplation. While the Orthodox Church has focused mainly on the practice of the Jesus prayer, the many Catholic mystics have described different stages of contemplation or inner prayer.

In the terminology of Christian mystics, meditation generally refers specifically to a systematic and directed dwelling or reflection upon some prayer or scriptural passage; or upon some truth or aspect of the spiritual life; or upon the closeness of death; or upon heaven and hell; or upon episodes from the life of Jesus, or of the Virgin Mary; or upon one's own sins and unworthiness; or even upon intellectual speculations concerning the nature of one's own being and that of God, and so on. In this sense, it is regarded as a necessary step towards contemplation, which is the state of complete absorption in God. The purpose of meditation is to develop the mind in a spiritual direction, to grow in human perfection, and to inculcate a feeling of love and devotion for God and for Jesus.

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, François de Sales, who has a great deal to say on the subject, provides the outline for ten possible guided meditations, each enumerating several points for the meditator to consider, followed by various resolutions to be made, and concluding with prayers and

thanksgiving. Each one begins with the instruction, “Place yourself in the presence of God and ask Him to inspire you.” As he adds elsewhere, “You will soon see how helpful this is.”¹⁴ The second of these meditations, “On why we were created,” begins with the “considerations”:

1. God has not placed you in the world because He needs you, for you are useless to Him, but simply to manifest His goodness in you by giving you His grace and glory; and to this end he has given you an intellect to know Him, a memory to remember Him, a will to love Him, an imagination to represent to yourself His benefits, eyes to look upon the wonder of His works, a tongue to speak His praise, and so of your other faculties.
2. Since you were created and put in the world for this end, you must reject and avoid any actions which lead you away from it, and count as vain and useless those which lead you no nearer.
3. Consider the wretchedness of worldly people who never think of their true purpose, but live as though they were created only to build houses, plant trees, amass riches, and amuse themselves.

François de Sales, Devout Life 1:10, IDL p.25

The ensuing “spiritual acts and resolutions” are, firstly, to “reproach yourself” for never having previously considered all this, and to recall what you had been thinking and doing instead; secondly, to “detest your past life”, and resolve to turn away from vanity, “useless reasonings”, “hateful memories”, bad friends, “wretched habits”, “selfish pleasures and unhappy indulgences”; and thirdly, to turn to God, and think of Him, and change your way of life. All sessions of meditation conclude with a thanksgiving to God for having provided such a glorious opportunity; a final offering of oneself and a resolution to put everything into practice; and a petition to God that He should accept “these desires and aspirations”, and a prayer for His blessing. The meditation ends, like the others, with the instruction, “Gather your bouquet of thoughts”.¹⁵ He also recommends:

Spend an hour every day, some time before the midday meal, in meditation, and the earlier the better, because your mind will then be less distracted, and fresh after a night’s sleep; but do not spend more than an hour unless your spiritual director expressly tells you to do so. If possible, it is best to make your meditation in church, because neither your family nor anyone else is likely to prevent you from staying there for an hour, whereas if you are dependent on others you might not be able to promise yourself an uninterrupted hour at home.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:1, IDL p.52

Many Christian writers, especially in medieval times, have suggested numerous such meditations, all designed to direct the mind towards devotion and prayer, often suggesting safeguards against mere intellectualizing and “preaching a sermon to oneself”, as some have described it.¹⁶ In the *Love of God*, François de Sales distinguishes between meditation and idle thought:

Meditation means thought, but thinking is not always meditating. There are times when the mind harbours thoughts for no rhyme or reason but to pass the time – like idle flies among the flowers. That kind of thing, however intent, cannot be called meditation; it is simply thought. Sometimes we think about something intently in order to learn its causes, effects, characteristics; such thought is called study – the mind acts like insects feeding indiscriminately on flowers and leaves. But when we think of divine things, to grow not in knowledge but in love – that is called meditation. We are meditating when the mind does not trifle like flies, nor devour like insects, but wanders as a mystic bee here and there among the mysteries of God, to gather the honey of divine love.

François de Sales, Love of God 6:2, LGFS p.221

Such meditation can yield a blissful result:

Constant meditation upon the holy scriptures will perpetually fill the soul with incomprehensible ecstasy and joy in God.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 13, On Solitude, MTIN p.84

As enticing as such meditations may become, once the mind has become sufficiently interested in spiritual things and turns readily to Him, the need for such meditation is replaced by deep inner prayer or contemplation. Reflective or discursive meditation is therefore a preparation or stepping stone. As the Spanish priest and mystic Juan Falconi (1596–1638) puts it: “One must not always meditate, but must pass on to contemplation.”¹⁷ Meditation is “seeking, reasoning, masticating the divine food, enjoying it, letting it rest interiorly”. Contemplation is “the end and terminus of the journey; it is to attain to an understanding and knowledge of God”.¹⁸ Diego Murillo (1555–1616) therefore defines meditation:

The office of meditation is to consider studiously and attentively to reflect upon divine things ... so as to move the heart to have some feeling concerning them. But contemplation is, as it were, to have found some feeling already and to be having fruition of it, not with reasonings and speculations, but with a simple gaze of truth.

Diego Murillo, Instruction 4:3.9, IEVP pp.213–14, in SSM3 p.112

Spanish religious writers and mystics commonly speak of four stages on the spiritual path: spiritual reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation, drawing on a saying of Jesus in support: “Seek (in reading) and you will find (in meditation); knock (in prayer) and it will be opened to you (in contemplation).”¹⁹

Considerable significance is attached to the transition from meditation to contemplation. John of the Cross describes it as a “drawing forth the soul from the life of the sense into that of the spirit, . . . wherein it no longer has any power to work or to reason with its faculties concerning the things of God”.²⁰

Juan Falconi, who trained all beginners in the practice of “meditation upon the Passion of our Redeemer”, says that this transition varies from person to person, “I tell them to persevere in these meditations for so long a time as seems to me necessary – that is, until they are able to pass to contemplation. In this matter, no one rule can be observed in all cases, for some will need to meditate longer than others.”²¹ Luis de la Puente describes this as the moment when “the fire of love kindles”²² within the soul. This enkindling is the aim of each meditation, and the question of when to pass on from meditation is thus resolved naturally for each individual.

The essence of these descriptions is that when meditation is fruitful, and generates an interior love in the soul, the reasoning and discursive activity of meditation automatically ceases, giving way to the inner quiet of contemplation.

The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* describes “spiritual meditations” as belonging to the “higher part of the active life and the lower part of the contemplative life”.²³ But however sweet these meditations may be:

It nevertheless behoves a man or a woman who has long been practising these meditations to leave them . . . if he is ever to pierce the cloud of unknowing between him and his God.

Cloud of Unknowing 7; cf. CUEU p.81

The same author explains more fully:

Such meditations, good and helpful though they may be, when they are preferred to the naked awareness of your own being and the surrender of yourself to God, break up and divide the unity that is so essential for a deep encounter between your soul and God. So keep yourself recollected and poised in the deep centre of your spirit. On no account drift back to previous practices, however seemingly holy or sublime your rational mind may consider them to be. . . .

Such thoughts will not satisfy your present need, further your growth, nor bring you and others closer to perfection. Let them be. Truly these meditations are useless to you now. But this naked, general awareness of your own being, conceived in an undivided heart, will

satisfy your present need, further your growth, and bring you and all mankind closer to perfection. Believe me, it far surpasses the value of any particular thought, no matter how sublime. . . .

No clever or ingenious meditations, by themselves, can ever bring you to contemplation – be they ever so unusual, subtle, lovely, or deep; be they of your sinful past, the Passion of Christ, the joys of our Lady, or the saints and angels in heaven; or of the qualities, subtleties, and states of your being or God’s. For myself, I choose to have nothing except that naked, blind sense of my own self, which I spoke of earlier. . . . So I say that it is essential, at a certain point, to give up discursive meditation and learn to taste something of that deep, spiritual experience of God’s love.

Book of Privy Counselling 2, 3, 9, 12; cf. *CU* (3, 14, 23) pp.142, 145, 161–62, 175, *CUCW* pp.166, 168, 185, 198

Meditation or reflection, however, do have a part to play:

All the same, these sweet meditations do have their place and value. They are the surest path for a newly converted sinner when he begins to gain a spiritual awareness of himself and God. I would think it quite impossible – at least as I understand it, though with God all things are possible – for a sinner to attain such an awareness without having first seen and experienced, through imagination and meditation, his own earthly behaviour as well as the manifold works of God, and without grieving over what was grievous and rejoicing over what was joyful.

Book of Privy Counselling 9; cf. *CU* (14) p.162, *CUCW* p.185, *LPD* p.54

Evidence of meditational practices in the very earliest Christian times, before the desert fathers laid the foundation of the monastic tradition, is often illusive, and frequently a matter of interpretation. Jesus’ statement in John’s gospel, for instance, “I and my Father are one,”²⁴ is essentially a description of a mystical state, achieved through meditation. If all later Christians who have achieved communion with God have done so through inner practice, then surely Jesus, as the great exemplar would have done so too, even if he had been born with the ability. Likewise, when Jesus tells his disciples that he will “come again”,²⁵ the meaning is of an inner not an outer experience. Even so, there are no places among his extant sayings where Jesus says explicitly to his disciples, “Do your meditation!”

There are also social reasons why spiritual practices are not clearly mentioned in the earliest Christian literature. Such practices have not always been acceptable to authoritarian religions and regimes. Due to the possibility of persecution, ancient writers were often reluctant to speak openly of meditation. Moreover, since meditation of any kind is best learnt from a skilled guide and practitioner, the techniques were rarely made public. Indeed, in

Jesus' day, in the pagan world of Greek and Roman culture, the tradition of the mystery religions held sway: the secrets of initiation were not to be divulged to non-initiates.

A saying to this effect, quoted by a number of the early writers, is attributed to Jesus. Both Clement of Alexandria and the *Clementine Homilies* have it as, "Keep my mysteries for me and for the sons of my house;"²⁶ and a variant of the same saying appears in the *Acts of John*, where Jesus says, "Keep silence about my mysteries."²⁷ The meaning is twofold. Firstly, it means that disciples should keep quiet and not talk about their inner revelations or experiences. Secondly, even certain of the teachings and instructions, especially those concerning the techniques of meditation, should be kept secret.

The search for evidence of meditation among the early Christians is further hampered by the disinclination of scholars, especially of the West, to acknowledge the existence of meditation in the very early Church and to make appropriate translations. In many ways, this is surprising, because the early gnostic tradition is specifically mystical in nature. *Gnōsis* means the inner knowledge of God, and it is axiomatic that inner knowledge is acquired by inner practice.

A perusal of the literature of the early Christian period, however, does provide a number of examples where the writers seem to be speaking of meditation, though in some the meaning is more evident than in others. Part of the problem is that there are few, if any, terms in early Christianity that are used exclusively for meditation or spiritual practice. Therefore, in translating ancient texts, Western scholars have commonly translated terms that refer to spiritual practice by a variety of words or expressions that fail to convey the correct meaning. There is a good example of this in the *Second Apocalypse of James*, where the writer says:

Once when I was sitting meditating,
he (Jesus) opened the door.

Second Apocalypse of James 50; cf. *NHS11* pp.120–21

The original scholarly translation has "deliberating", rather than "meditating". But since the inner door is only opened by sitting in concentrated meditation of a spiritual nature, sitting and deliberating – or letting the mind wander about – would have precisely the opposite effect.

There are other places where the meaning is clear, but not specific as to particular meditational practices. There is an instance of this in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*:

Let us all, therefore, be united in the Name of the Lord,
and let us honour Him in His goodness,
and let our faces shine in His light,

and let our hearts meditate in His love,
by night and by day:
Let us be joyful in the joy of the Lord. . . .

And His Word is with us all along our way,
the saviour who gives life does not reject our souls.

Odes of Solomon 41:5–7, 11, OSD pp.170, 172

To “meditate in His love, by night and by day” means that the mind is constantly in touch with the experience of divine love. This can only come about through the practice of meditation or mystic prayer. The writer is giving an accurate description of a way of being and a way of life – it is not a flight of poetic fancy inspired by religious zeal with little bearing on the individual’s actual state of mind.

That is why he says, “His Word is with us all along our way”. The writer is speaking of a spiritual state of conscious and continuous contact with the Word, something that is only achieved by long devotion to meditation. Taking the remaining *Odes* into consideration, there is little doubt of the poet’s meaning being entirely mystical.

There is another passage, in the early literature of the Judaeo-Christians (who would have been the direct spiritual descendants of Jesus’ disciples), that must surely refer to internal meditation. In the *Clementine Recognitions*, the writer speaks of Peter’s nocturnal “meditation” and “prayer”:

As soon as day began to advance the dawn upon the retiring darkness, Peter having gone into the garden to pray and returning thence and coming to us, by way of excuse for awaking and coming to us a little later than usual, said this: “Now that springtime has lengthened the day, of course the night is shorter; if, therefore, one desires to occupy some portion of the night in meditation (*L. vigilare*), one must not keep the same hours for waking at all seasons, but should spend the same length of time in sleeping, whether the night be longer or shorter, and be exceedingly careful that one does not reduce the period that one is in the habit of giving to meditation (*L. vigilare*) by adding to one’s sleep and lessening one’s time of keeping awake.

It is also necessary to regulate the time of eating in case one should arise from sleep while the food is still undigested, the undigested mass should load the mind, and by the exhalation of crude spirits render the inner sense confused and disturbed. It is right, therefore, that that part (the body) should also be cherished with sufficient rest, so that, those things being sufficiently accomplished which are due to it, the body may be able in other things to render due service to the mind (*L. mens*).

Clementine Recognitions VI:1; cf. CR p.327

Peter goes “into the garden to pray”. He goes to find solitude in a quiet place and on returning advises the disciples that because the lengthening days of spring and summer will mean less hours of darkness, they will need to adjust their daily schedules. This includes the timing of their evening meal, so that the food is digested by the morning and does not draw the attention down, nor disturb the mind. Peter is not specific, but he does point out that care should always be taken that the time given to meditation is not curtailed, nor even the amount of time required for sleep. Sufficient rest is required to permit the mind to be alert and avoid falling back to sleep once again as soon as a person sits in meditation.

It is clear from this passage that Peter’s “prayer” is to be equated with internal meditation, for otherwise the passage makes little sense. The original translation, however, has Peter recommending nocturnal “study”. Quite apart from the fact that simple people, as many of Jesus’ disciples most probably were, could hardly be expected to rise at night and study (by candlelight), there is absolutely no indication whatsoever in any early Christian literature that Jesus advocated scholarly study as a means of reaching God. In fact, he seemed to extol the virtues of simplicity and innocence.

Another word substituted incorrectly for meditation in scholarly translations of the Clementine literature is ‘consideration’. One of the central characters, for example, is praised to his previously long-lost mother as being a “man of consideration”²⁸ – an epithet that probably makes better sense in the context if it means a “man of meditation” – a wise and spiritual man.

The same word is also used in translations of the Manichaean manuscripts from Chinese Turkestan, as in the exhortation:

Cease from every kind of evil doing,
and return to your native Source! . . .
Control your thoughts:
rectify and regulate them constantly;
Contemplate and meditate continuously
upon the real and true *Dharma* (C. *zhēn zhèngfǎ*).
Mónjiào xiàbù zàn, T54 2140:1275c27–29; cf. *LSMH* (245–46) p.197

Here, the original translation has “think and consider the real and right Law”. The “Law (C. *fǎ*)”, the Buddhist *Dharma*, in this context is probably the immanent creative power, and the reader is being exhorted to keep his mind in constant inner contact with this divine power. No one can hold one intellectual thought in their mind “continuously”. But the mind can very easily become “continuously” absorbed in the divine music of the creative power because it is the essence of one’s own being, and this is clearly the meaning intended here.

There are other terms and expressions, too, that are incorrectly translated by various scholars. Among these are the Greek, *logismos*, often translated as ‘reasoning’, and *dialektikē*, from which comes the English ‘dialectic’. The two words have both mundane and spiritual meanings, but when used in a mystical context, it is meditation or spiritual practice that is more obviously implied. Similarly, expressions translated as ‘pious deeds’ or ‘good deeds’ are sometimes better rendered as ‘spiritual practice’.

See also: **contemplation, dialectic, dying while living (8.3), Jesus prayer, logismos, mental prayer, pious deeds, second coming (8.4).**

1. *E.g. Psalms* 1:2, 16:7, 17:3, 22:2, 42:8, 63:6, 77:6.
2. Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a ff.
3. Empedoclēs, *Fragment B1*, in *DK1* p.308.
4. Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9, *Parmenidēs* 1.
5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1:3.17; Apollonius, *Mirabilia* 3, *SRMG* p.104; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3:32; Plutarch, *Moralia* 592–3; Pliny, *Natural History* 7:174; Lucian, *Panegyric to the Fly* 7.
6. Yulia Ustinov, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind*, *CAGM* p.208, *passim*.
7. Plato, *Symposium* 220b–d.
8. Plato, *Symposium* 175a–d.
9. *E.g.* Seneca, *Epistles* 15:1ff., 107:3, *On Anger* 2:10.7; Epictetus, *Discourses* 3:8.11, 1:1.25; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4:10, 6:47, 19:17.
10. Paraphrased from R.J. Newman, *Cotidie Meditari*, *CMMS* p.1475.
11. See R.J. Newman, *Cotidie Meditari*, *CMMS* p.1479.
12. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, *PWLS* p.85.
13. ‘Ināyat Khān, *Sufi Message*, *SMIK1* pp.93–97.
14. François de Sales, *Devout Life* 1:9, 2:1, *IDL* pp.23, 52.
15. François de Sales, *Devout Life* 1:10, *IDL* pp.25–26.
16. Clifton Walters, in *CUCW* p.22.
17. Juan Falconi, *Straight Road to Heaven* 3, *OJF2* p.14; *cf.* in *SSM2* p.291.
18. Juan Falconi, *Straight Road to Heaven* 3, *OJF2* p.15, in *SSM2* p.291.
19. *Matthew* 7:7; *cf. KJV*; *e.g.* Bernardino de Laredo, *Ascent of Mount Sion* 2:15, *SMSL* fol.75r; *cf.* in *SSM2* p.46.
20. John of the Cross, *Dark Night* 10:1, *CWJC1* p.356.
21. Juan Falconi, *Letter to a Religious*, *LSRF* p.4, in *SSM2* p.285.
22. Luis de la Puente, *Exposition* 9:23, in *SSM2* p.260.
23. *Cloud of Unknowing* 8; *cf. CUEU* p.86.
24. *John* 10:30, *KJV*.
25. *John* 14:1ff.
26. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 5:10, *cf. WCA2* p.258; *Clementine Homilies* 19:20, *cf. CH* p.305.

27. *Acts of John* 96, AA p.15.
28. *Clementine Homilies* XII:23, CH p.203.

meditation posture (in Judaism) The favoured posture adopted for meditation, before the recent exposure of Judaism to Indian and Buddhist traditions, was the position described in the biblical book of *Kings* concerning the prophet Elijah:

And Elijah went up to the top of the Carmel (mountain); and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees.

1 Kings 18:42, KB

Though not clearly described, the posture is generally understood to be that of sitting on the ground, legs bent up to the chest, with the arms around the knees and the head between them.

According to a commentary by Ḥai Gaon (939–1038) on the *Hekhalot* texts, which describe the inner journey of the *Merkavah* mystics of the rabbinic period (fl. C1st BCE – C6th CE), this is probably the meditation posture that they too adopted:

You may perhaps know that many of the sages hold that when a man is worthy and blessed with certain qualities and he wishes to gaze at the heavenly chariot and the halls of the angels on high, he must follow certain exercises. He must fast for a specified number of days, he must place his head between his knees, whispering softly to himself ... certain praises of God with his face towards the ground. As a result he will gaze in the innermost recesses of his heart, and it will seem as if he saw the seven halls with his own eyes, moving from hall to hall to observe that which is therein to be found.

Ḥai Gaon in Ozar ha-Geonim, OGL4 pp.13–15, in SBJT p.32

In the *Talmud*, a story is told concerning the first-century mystic Ḥaninah ben Dosa, who also used this posture for his meditation:

Once when Ḥaninah was studying *Torah* with his master, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, the teacher's son became ill. As the illness became serious, Yoḥanan said to his student, "Ḥaninah, my son, ask mercy from God for him and he will live." Ḥaninah put his head down between his knees and prayed, asking mercy for the son of his teacher, and the boy lived. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said, "Now if ben Zakkai fastened his head between his knees all day long, there would not be any attention

paid to him.” (That is, he said if he himself had prayed, the heavenly powers would not have listened to him.)

Yoḥanan’s wife protested, “What? Is Ḥaninah greater than you?”

To this he replied, “There is this difference between us: he is like the body servant of a king, having at all times free access to the august presence, without even having to await permission to reach his ears; while I, like a nobleman before a king, must await an opportune moment.”

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot 34b; cf. JCL, JE

meḥikah (He) *Lit.* erasure, effacement; a method of trying to transcend the physical body in meditation by attempting to erase all images and impressions from the mind, often by means of oral or mental repetition of various formulae.

There is a passage describing this method in the anonymous late thirteenth-century work *Sha’arei Zedek* (‘Gates of Virtue’), probably written by a disciple of Rabbi Abraham Abulafia. Although the author’s approach is pejorative, he nevertheless refers to Muslim Sufis who chant the name of *Allāh* for this purpose, thus attaining a state of ecstasy:

I, so-and-so, one of the lowliest, have probed my heart for ways of grace to bring about spiritual expansion, and I have found three ways of progress towards spiritualization: the vulgar (*i.e.* common), the philosophic (intellectual, analytical), and the kabbalistic way. The vulgar way is that which, so I learned, is practised by Muslim ascetics. They employ all manner of devices to shut out from their souls all ‘natural forms’, every image of the familiar, natural world. Then, they say, when a spiritual form, an image from the spiritual world, enters their soul, it is isolated in their imagination and intensifies the imagination to such a degree that they can determine beforehand that which is to happen to us. Upon enquiry, I learned that they summon the Name, “*Allāh*”, as it is in the language of Ishmael. I investigated further and I found that, when they pronounce these letters, they direct their thought completely away from every possible ‘natural form’, and the very letters ALLĀH and their diverse powers work upon them. They are carried off into a trance without realizing how, since no Kabbalah has been transmitted to them. The removal of all natural forms and images from the soul is called *meḥikah* (effacement).

Sha’arei Zedek, SZGS, in MTGS p.147

See also: **bittul** (8.1).

mental prayer Prayer that takes place in the mind; in Christianity, specifically, the practice of meditation as the deliberate reflection upon some precept or passage from the Bible, an incident from the life of Jesus, *etc.*, with the intention of instructing and directing the mind, and inculcating a feeling of devotion; more generally, any form of interior prayer, including the higher degrees of contemplation; commonly contrasted with oral or vocal prayer; synonymous in the Orthodox Church with mental repetition of the prayer of Jesus (“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me”), in which the attention of the mind is focused in the heart.

Since mental prayer in one form or another is a natural tendency among those of a contemplative disposition, it may be presumed that it was practised by many, with or without guidance. Mental repetition of the prayer of Jesus, for instance, is known to have had an early origin, its first explicit mention appearing in the writings of Neilos the Ascetic (*d.c.*430).¹ Neilos was abbot of a monastery near Ankara and possibly a disciple of John Chrysostom (c.345–407), Greek patriarch and archbishop of Constantinople (398–404).

Mental prayer is also mentioned by a number of the early fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, including John Chrysostom, Cassian, Jerome, Basil the Great, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine. After the eleventh-century division of Christianity into what became the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, little record of methodical meditational practices is found in the western Church before the fifteenth century, even in the monasteries.²

Monastic rules, which laid down the code of conduct and way of life, generally included times for common prayer, but mental prayer was left to the inclination of the individual. Before the mid-twelfth century, it is known that the Carthusians set aside time for mental prayer, but no further rules were provided. Early in the sixteenth century, the Milan chapter of the Dominicans instituted a half hour session of mental prayer, morning and evening. Likewise, the Franciscans seem to have adopted the practice during the middle of the same century. Among the Carmelites, no special time was set apart for mental prayer until a two-hour period was introduced by Teresa of Ávila, again in the sixteenth century. The spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits (1534), adopted into the rule thirty years after the founding, were so clearly laid out that they were commonly adopted in various forms by laypeople.³

In the Catholic tradition, from the sixteenth century onwards, the practice of mental prayer enjoyed increasing popularity among the laity as well as in the monasteries. A large number of books and manuals on mental prayer were published during this period, made possible by the mid-fifteenth-century invention of the printing press. The practice of mental prayer, however, was often regarded with fear, distrust, uncertainty and suspicion, especially by the intellectuals, among whom were numbered the theologians of the Inquisition. A deep divide thus developed between those of a spiritual disposition, who

had personal experience in prayer, and the merely intellectual and learned, who regulated religious practice and belief. Many practitioners of the higher forms of prayer were subject to investigation, and a number of individuals and groups, such as the Illuminists, were deemed heretical. Many were cast into prison or forced into exile.

In 1559, the Archbishop of Seville and Supreme Inquisitor, Fernando Valdés, published a list of banned books, which included almost all those concerned with prayer, many of which were well known and well loved. The formidable Dominican, Melchior Cano, taught that the practice of mental prayer was not only a danger to the Church but to the entire Christian republic as well. He ridiculed the idea that the practice of mental prayer was more effective in the development of virtue than other practices.⁴

Women were especially subject to suspicion. Regarded as the daughters of Eve who had originally succumbed to the devil in the Garden of Eden, they were often portrayed as more likely intermediaries of the devil. In the writings of Teresa of Ávila, although she expresses no fear of the Inquisitors,⁵ fear of the wiles of the devil is a recurrent theme. At the time of her experiences, she may have been convinced that they were of God, but later she would start to wonder whether the devil had been deceiving her. As she relates, "This fear increased in such a way that it made me diligently seek out spiritual persons to consult."⁶ The counsel she received, however, was not always of the best, and when advised to resist the experiences, she found that they only became greater.

It was this atmosphere of fear, suspicion and ignorance that prompted her to insist that there is nothing to fear in the practice of mental prayer. In fact it brings great blessings:

The blessings possessed by one who practises prayer – I mean mental prayer – have been written of by many saints and holy men. Glory be to God for this! If it were not so, I should not have assurance enough . . . to dare to speak of it. I can speak of what I know by experience – namely, that no one who has begun this practice, whatever sins he may commit, should ever abandon it. For it is the means by which we may amend our lives, and without it amendment will be very much harder. . . .

Whoever has not begun the practice of prayer, I beg for the love of the Lord not to miss so great a blessing. There is nothing here to fear, but only something to desire. Mental prayer . . . is nothing but an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him whom we know loves us. . . . I do not understand the fears of those who are afraid to begin mental prayer. I do not know what they fear.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 8:5, 7; cf. CWT1 pp.96–97, CWT1 pp.49–51

In general, mental prayer included all forms of prayer beyond that of the merely vocal or oral – from deliberate reflection, to the silent verbal repetition of a prayer, to the increasingly deep degrees of interior recollection and contemplation. A number of manuals of mental prayer were published, covering the entire range of practice and experience, many in the language of the common people rather than in Latin, making them accessible to all.

In François de Sales' classic manual for the layperson, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (published 1609), written in French, mental prayer is understood as reflection or meditation, rather than contemplation. It is, he says, superior to vocal prayer, although mandatory vocal prayers (the "Divine Office" or liturgy) are not to be neglected:

If during vocal prayer you feel drawn to interior or mental prayer do not resist this interior attraction; allow your mind to turn gently in that direction and do not worry because you have not said as many vocal prayers as you intended, the mental prayer which has taken their place being much more pleasing to God and much more profitable to your soul. One exception to this rule, of course, is the Divine Office if we are bound to say it, for in that case we must first fulfil our obligation.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:2, IDL p.53

Such prayer, he counsels, should be accompanied by an awareness of the presence of God:

Always begin your prayers, mental or vocal, by placing yourself in the presence of God; you will soon see how helpful this is. . . . Be very careful to attend to what you are saying and conform your heart to the sentiments expressed. Do not try to say too many prayers but say with sincerity those that you do say; one *Pater* (the Lord's Prayer) said devoutly being of greater value than many said hastily.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:1, IDL p.52

Angela of Foligno (1248–1309) describes three kinds of prayer: vocal, mental and supernatural, the latter including the higher degrees of contemplation:

Mental prayer is when the meditation of God fills the mind so entirely that it thinks of nothing else but God. . . . So completely is the mind filled with God that it can concern itself with nothing else, nor think of anything but God. Hence, from this mental prayer proceeds supernatural (prayer).

Angela of Foligno, Book of Divine Consolation 2:20; cf. BDC pp.99–100

Jacopone da Todi (b.c. 1230) regards such interior prayer as his own personal treasure, not to be heedlessly divulged to others:

My mental prayer I make to God in secrecy;
And lock my heart full heedfully,
that its delight my brother may not see.

Jacopone da Todi, Lauda 47, Or udite la battaglia, in JTPM p.154

Contrary to the violently conflicting attitudes in the medieval Catholic Church, the Orthodox tradition has always encouraged the practice of mental prayer, in particular the prayer of Jesus. This did not mean, of course, that all were enamoured of the practice. The worldly mind will always seek to denigrate it:

However rich it may be in worldly wisdom, the carnal and natural mind always regards mental prayer very suspiciously and unsympathetically. It is a means of union of the human spirit with God, and therefore it is particularly strange and hateful for those who are content for their spirit to remain in the company of rejected and fallen spirits, hostile to God, who are unaware of their fall, who proclaim and exalt the fallen state as if it were a state of the highest progress and proficiency.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 16, OPJ p.128

In fact, those who reject mental prayer in favour of vocal prayer are unlikely to achieve proficiency even in that; for without the discipline of concentration learned in mental prayer, the mind will always wander while the tongue repeats the prayer:

Those who reject the practice of mental prayer ... engage exclusively in vocal prayer without even so attaining due proficiency. By rejecting a practical knowledge of mental prayer, they cannot acquire in oral prayer due attention, which is secured pre-eminently by mental prayer. Psalmody (singing psalms and hymns) performed vocally and orally, without attention and with considerable distraction ... acts on the soul very feebly and superficially, and produces fruits corresponding to its action. Very often when it is performed with clockwork regularity and in great quantity, it gives birth to conceit and its consequences.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 16, OPJ pp.129–30

Many, wrote Basil the Great, having no experience of mental prayer, feel that it is only for the holy, not realizing that outward “hymns and prayers” were intended only as a stepping stone to higher forms of praise and prayer:

Many having no practical knowledge of mental activity, erroneously judge that mental activity is suitable only for dispassionate and holy

men. For this reason, from outward habit, they keep only to psalmody, troparions (Byzantine hymns) and canons, and doze in this merely outward prayer of theirs. They do not understand that the hymns and prayers that have been handed down to us by the fathers are only for a time, on account of the weakness and childishness of our mind, so that by gradually training ourselves we may mount to the degree of mental activity, and not stay till our dying day merely in psalmody. What is even more childish is when we say with our mouth our outward prayer, and are carried away by the joyful thought that we are doing something great, consoling ourselves merely with quantity, and thereby nourishing the inner Pharisee!

Basil the Great, Preface to Gregory the Sinaite, in OPJ p.130

Most people who commence the practice of mental prayer come with a wealth of images and concepts that have to be discarded before mental prayer can be effective:

Mental prayer is neither artistic creation nor scientific investigation, neither philosophic research and speculation, nor abstract intellectual theology, all of which relate to the sphere of the imagination which must be overcome if one is to attain perfect prayer, true theology, and a life verily pleasing to God.

Therefore, the Orthodox monk seeks the true God, the Creator, entering through mental prayer into conflict with an innumerable variety of images, some having outward forms, contours, colours and an extension in space and time, others being thought forms – conceptions – in order to be able to pray to God, face to face, divested of all created images.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.99

See also: **meditation, prayer of Jesus.**

1. Nilos the Ascetic, *Letters* 2:140, 214, 3:273, 278, PG79 cols.260a, 261d, 312c, 520c, 521b–c.
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies* 6, 30; Cassian, *Conference* 9; Jerome, *Epistula* 22 *ad Eustochium*; Basil the Great, *Homily on St Julitta, In regular breviori* 301; Cyprian, *In expositione orationis dominicalis*; Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 6:3; Augustine, *Epistula* 121 *ad Probam*.
3. See “prayer,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911.
4. Kieran Kavanaugh, *Introduction*, CWT1 p.30.
5. Teresa of Ávila, *Life* 33.
6. Teresa of Ávila, *Life* 23:3, CWT1 p.201.

merkavah (He) *Lit.* chariot, vehicle; a term used by Jewish mystics mostly from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE for their spiritual meditation and the experience of transport to inner spiritual realms. In this context, the chariot is a metaphor for the human body (within which the spiritual journey takes place), together with the lights, sounds and angelic beings that accompany the soul on its inner journey.

The culmination of this journey was understood to be the throne of God, on which the vision of God's 'being' or presence would appear. Sometimes this divine presence is identified with Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, a biblical character who, according to the apocryphal *Books of Enoch*, ascended to supernal realms and was transformed into the angel *Metatron*. In many descriptions, the chariot itself becomes the throne. Since the chariot journey is also the inner spiritual journey, the throne can be understood as the seat or origin of the soul – the reflection of God's image within the soul.

Those who journeyed on the inner chariot were called *Merkavah* mystics (*yorday ha-merkavah*), and the literature that developed around their experiences became known as the *Merkavah* or *Hekhalot* literature. These writings speak of seven heavens (*shamayim*), the highest of which is comprised of seven *hekhalot* (palaces), of a successively increasing degree of spirituality. In the seventh and highest is the throne of God. The texts say that the *merkavah* was characterized by glorious lights, colours, sounds, music and, as in the description of the prophet Ezekiel, various heavenly beings.¹ A spiritual traveller would cross several realms until reaching the highest spiritual realm, the region of the throne.

In the *Merkavah* literature, although the usage is inconsistent, the spiritual journey on the *merkavah* is more often called a descent than an ascent, and over the centuries scholars have wondered why. Some have suggested that it arose from humility, because through meditation the practitioner prepared himself for divine grace and effulgence to flow down into him, rather than aspiring to ascend to God's level, which could be perceived as arrogance. Others have speculated that ascent and descent signify different meditation techniques. Gershom Scholem suggests that "perhaps it means those who reach down into themselves in order to perceive the chariot."² Also, in gnostic texts, to which the *Merkavah* texts have been compared, the Divine has been depicted as the Depth, the essential foundation of all being and existence. Whatever the rationale behind the imagery, both 'ascent' and 'descent' are metaphors, since the 'journey' is 'travelled' in consciousness not in space.

Merkavah mysticism seems to be the first documented mystical movement in Judaism:

While the problem of the mystical nature of some biblical texts, prophetic or poetic, and some parts of apocrypha literature is mainly a problem of definition, there seems to be little doubt that, from

a historical point of view, the first major mystical phenomenon in Jewish culture known to us is the appearance of the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature. This literature is not the work of a lonely mystic, but a historical school, which probably developed throughout a period of several centuries, and had a profound impact upon later Jewish mysticism. . . . (Some of) this literature is attributed consistently in our sources to a group of *tanna'im*, the *mishnaic* sages, most prominent among them being Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, Rabbi Nehuniah ben ha-Kanah, and Rabbi Eli'ezer the Great.

Joseph Dan, "Mysticism in Jewish History, Religion, and Literature," in SJMD pp.3–4

The *Merkavah* mystics, therefore, were not unknown personalities. In fact, the sages who wrote the *Talmud* and other religious texts, and who guided the ethical and moral life of the people, were the ones who wrote these esoteric texts. They would impart their mystic knowledge in secret to those disciples whom they deemed worthy, in order to protect the teachings from misuse. Also thought to be included among the early *Merkavah* mystics were notable rabbis such as Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, Hillel, Jonathan ben Uzziel, Akiva, and Rabbi Joshua.

The metaphor of the chariot mainly derives from biblical descriptions of the mystical ascent of the prophets Elijah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. In *Ezekiel*, the chariot is generated out of intense fire, lightning, and flashes of *hashmal*, a substance that has not been clearly identified. Interestingly, in modern Hebrew, *hashmal* is the term used for electricity.

The *merkavah* (chariot) of Ezekiel is described as an assemblage of four fantastical winged creatures – part human, part angel, part animal – which move by means of the rotation of the wheels within wheels that are joined to them from beneath, creating other-worldly sounds and visions. The chariot would move in whatever direction the holy spirit took it, implying that its reach was limitless.

It may be presumed that the biblical and *Merkavah* descriptions of the chariot symbolize the celestial beings, sights and sounds encountered during the inner journey, the symbolism of which is difficult to comprehend with a modern mindset. Whatever the detailed meaning may be, it is clear that the *Merkavah* mystics, like mystics of other times and places, are speaking of an inner experience of light and sound that can be experienced by those who access these inner realms in meditation.

Origins

It is generally assumed that *merkavah* is derived from *rakhav* (to ride), in the sense that during the inner journey the mystic 'rides' on the current of sound and light. In the course of this journey, his consciousness ascends from

a state in which God is unknown, to one in which He is knowable, through His manifestation as sound and light. In other words, the *merkavah* state is where God begins to reveal Himself.

The main biblical texts on which the *Merkavah* mysticism is based recount the experiences of the prophets Elijah (C9th BCE) and Ezekiel (C6th BCE). According to 2 *Kings*, Elijah is taken up to heaven in a “chariot of fire (*rekhev esh*)” and a “whirlwind”, while he is still living, making no mention of his physical death. Later mystics understood this account to be a description of his spiritual ascent. The story also describes how Elijah opened the spiritual vision of his disciple Elisha, so he that would be able to witness the transition of his master from earthly to spiritual life. At this point in the narrative, Elijah and Elisha are standing on the banks of the Jordan:

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and struck the waters, and they parted to one side and to the other, so that the two went over dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I can do for you, before I am taken away from you.”

And Elisha said, “I beg you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.”

And he said, “You have asked a difficult thing; nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so to you; but if not, it shall not be so.”

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire (*rekhev esh*), and horses of fire, and separated them one from the other; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel (*rekhev Isra'el*), and its horsemen.” And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and tore them in two pieces.

2 *Kings* 2:8–12; cf. JCL

The lengthy description of Ezekiel’s vision is generally referred to as *Ma’aseh Merkavah* (‘Events of the Chariot’), and is portrayed in *Merkavah* literature as a most esoteric and holy text, too dangerous to be studied by anyone unprepared for mystical experience. Ezekiel relates:

The hand of *Yahweh* came upon me, and I looked and, behold, a stormy wind blew from the north, a great cloud, and a fire flaring up, and a brightness was around it, as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. And out of its midst came the likeness of four living creatures (*hayyot*).

And this was their appearance: they were of human likeness. And each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight, and they had hooves like oxen, which sparkled with the colour of burnished bronze. And they had human hands under their wings, and their four faces were turned to the four quarters. . . .

As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face in front, and the face of a lion on the right side, and the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back. Thus were their faces; and their wings were spread upward; each had two wings that touched and two wings that covered their bodies. And each one moved straight forward; and they went where the spirit urged them, they did not waver when they moved.

As for the likeness of the living creatures (*ḥayyot*), their appearance was like burning coals of fire and like the appearance of flaming torches; and it flashed back and forth between the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and from the fire went forth lightning; and the living creatures darted to and fro like the appearance of a flash of lightning.

And as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the ground by each of them, one beside each of the four. And the wheels and their construction glittered as if made of chrysolite; and all four looked alike, and their appearance and their construction was like that of a wheel set in the midst of a wheel. And when they moved, they moved in any of the four directions, keeping their course unswervingly. As for their rims, they were so high that they were enormous, and all four rims had eyes all the way around. And when the living creatures moved, the wheels moved with them; and when the living creatures left the ground, the wheels also left the ground. And wherever the spirit urged them, there the wheels went, since the spirit of the living creature was also in the wheels. . . .

Over the heads of the living creatures a sort of vault, gleaming like awesome crystal, arched above them; and beneath this vault each had two wings stretched out to one another and two covering its body. And when they moved, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the noise of a storm, like the noise of an army camp. And when they halted, they folded their wings.

And above the vault that was above their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like lapis lazuli; and upon the likeness of the throne was a being with the likeness of a man. And he shone with the colour of *ḥashmal*; and close to and all around him from what seemed his loins upwards was what looked like fire; and from what seemed his loins downwards, I saw what looked like fire, and a light

all round like a rainbow in the clouds on rainy days; that is how the surrounding light appeared. It was something that looked like the glory of *Yahweh*. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one speaking.

Ezekiel 1:3–28; cf. JB, JCL, RSV

The voice then gives the prophet instructions regarding his mission to the children of Israel. Later in *Ezekiel*,³ these *hayyot* (living creatures) with four faces, which transported the prophet through the spiritual realms, are called the *keruvim* (cherubs), a term from the same root as *merkavah*, suggesting that the *merkavah* is actually an assemblage of *keruvim*. The *keruv*, or cherub, appears from time to time in Jewish mystical literature as a personified power or angel that intervenes between humanity and God. In the holy of holies of the Temple, large statues of the *keruvim* were portrayed as sphinx-like creatures whose wings were spread to cover the ark of the covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. The outspread wings created a seat or throne on which, it was believed, God's presence would alight. It has therefore been suggested that the origin of the concept of the *merkavah* was the ascent of Ezekiel in the joined assemblage of the *keruvim*.

Merkavah Mysticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature that developed during rabbinic times describes the spiritual experiences in the *merkavah* of several biblical figures and legendary mystics of the early rabbinic period, dating from the first century BCE. This is the main literature in which the inner journey in the *merkavah* appears. In recent years, however, an earlier literature referring to the *merkavah* journey has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, probably dating from the second and first centuries BCE. This indicates a historical link between the biblical use of the *merkavah* metaphor and the later rabbinic *Merkavah* literature. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls is a psalm, the *Song of the Sacrifice of the Twelfth Sabbath*, that was intended for recitation on the twelfth Sabbath of the year, according to the annual cycle of *Torah* reading. It demonstrates that the metaphor of the chariot for the spiritual journey was in use by Jewish mystics many centuries earlier than had been realized. It also suggests that there may have been a more or less secret transmission of the esoteric tradition that has yet to be uncovered or documented.

Although the imagery is clearly influenced by the visions of Elijah and Ezekiel, the beauty and clarity of the account suggests that it could have been written by a mystic who entered the spiritual regions and heard the inner sound and saw the inner light with the eyes and ears of his soul. The “still small voice”, signifying God's self-revelation to the prophet Elijah in the ninth century BCE,⁴ appears here as the “sound of divine stillness” and the “still sound of blessing” that comes from the movement of the angels:

Praise the God of cycles of wonder and exalt Him:
 glory is in the tabernacle of the God of knowledge.
 The *keruvim* fall before Him and bless Him:
 as they rise the sound of divine stillness [is heard].
 There is a tumult of jubilation:
 as they lift up their wings the sound of divine stillness is heard.
 The *keruvim* bless the form of the chariot-throne (*merkavah*),
 (which is) above the firmament of the *keruvim*.
 And they sing and praise the splendour of the luminous firmament,
 (which is) beneath His glorious seat.
 When the *ofanim* (wheels) move, the holy angels return.
 They emerge from His glorious wheels like the appearance of fire,
 spirits of the holy of holies round about,
 between the appearance of (mighty) streams of fire like *hashmal*.
 And there is radiance, embroidery of glorious and wonderful colours,
 wondrously hued, a pure blend.
 The spirits of living godlike beings which move perpetually
 with the glory of the wondrous chariots (*merkavot*).
 There is a still sound of blessing
 in the roar of their movement.
 They praise His holiness as they return to their paths.
 As they ascend, they ascend wondrously,
 and when they settle, they stand still.
 The sound of joyful praise falls silent.
 There is a stillness of divine blessing in all the camps of godlike beings;
 sound of praises . . . (coming) from among all their divisions.
 On their sides each of their number in his turn praises while passing by,
 and all their mastered troops rejoice, each one in his station.

Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, 4Q405 20.ii–22:6–14, SSSN p.303

Hekhalot Literature in Rabbinic Times

In the *Hekhalot* literature, the realm of the chariot (*'olam ha-merkavah*) is where the supreme Being, the supernal King, sits on His throne of glory – metaphorically speaking. The numerous creatures, wheels (*ofanim*, a class of angels) and angelic beings that are described in this literature dwell in the seven halls or palaces that comprise the highest of the seven heavens. In the topmost palace of the seventh heaven, the throne of the divine King is to be found. During spiritual practice, the soul of the disciple attempts to reach the throne and contemplate the glory of the king and the splendour of the *Shekhinah* (the divine presence). An angel (sometimes identified as the angel *Metatron*) is the guardian of the throne. The *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature speaks of the devotee making a chariot of light (*merkavat aur*) by which he ascends (or descends) to the supernal chambers. As in all descriptions of the

inner journey, in order to enter the presence of the King, the soul has to pass through many trials and awe-inspiring experiences.

The *Ma'aseh Merkavah* ('Events of the Chariot'), which refers to the biblical prophet Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot, describes how Rabbi Akiva, returning from his inner journey, asks rhetorically:

Who is able to contemplate the seven palaces (*hekhalot*)
and behold the heaven of heavens (*shamayyim*),
and see the chambers of chambers (holy of holies),
and say: "I saw the chamber of YH (*Yahweh*)."

Ma'aseh Merkavah, in *SHLS* §554, in *BDVA* p.1

Rabbi Akiva goes on to relate how levels of spiritual attainment correspond to specific stages of the celestial journey:

When I ascended to the first palace (*hekhal*), I was righteous; in the second palace, I was pure; in the third palace (*hekhal*), I was truthful; in the fourth palace (*hekhal*), I was perfect; in the fifth palace (*hekhal*), I brought holiness before the King of Kings, blessed be His name. In the sixth palace (*hekhal*), I said the sanctification before Him who spoke and fashioned and commanded all living beings, so that the angel would not destroy me. In the seventh palace (*hekhal*), I stood in all my power. I trembled in all my limbs.

Ma'aseh Merkavah, in *SHLS* §558, in *BDVA* pp.33–34

The meditation practices of the *Merkavah* mystics, as described in the *Hekhalot* literature, include the repetition of certain attributive names of God, or letters of these names – sometimes even nonsensical syllables derived from these names and letters. Such practices seem to be concentration and contemplation exercises based on repetition of spoken or written syllables, sounds, and names.

One of the most significant of these texts is the *Hekhalot Rabbati* ('Greater *Hekhalot*'). In one passage, the legendary Rabbi Ishmael ascends through the heavens (*shamayyim*), finally arriving at the seventh palace (*hekhal*) of the seventh heaven. In each palace he shows his "seals" (which may be imagined as serving the same purpose as passwords) to the guards at the gate. At the seventh heaven, he shows his "great seal" and the "awesome crown" to the awe-inspiring guards.⁵ The guards

then conduct him before the throne of glory. They bring before him all types of music and song, and they make music and a parade before him until they raise him and seat him near the *keruvim*, near the wheels (*ofanim*), and near the holy *hayyot* (living creatures). He sees wonders

and powers, majesty and greatness, holiness and purity, terror and meekness and righteousness, at the same time.

Rabbi Ishmael said: “All the *ḥaverim* (initiates) liken this to a man who has a ladder in the middle of his house, who ascends and descends on it and there is no creature who stops him. Blessed are you, Lord, God, who knows all secrets and is the Lord of hidden things. Amen. Amen.”

Hekhalot Rabbati 22:2–3, in *UJM1* p.73

The initiate’s overwhelming experience at the seventh palace is also described:

As soon as that man entreats to descend to the *merkavah*, Anaphiel the prince opens the doors of the seventh palace (*hekhal*) and that man enters and stands on the threshold of the gate of the seventh palace (*hekhal*), and the holy *ḥayyot* lift him up. Five hundred and twelve eyes, and each and every eye of the eyes of the holy *ḥayyot* is hollow like the holes in a sieve woven of branches. These eyes appear like lightning, and they dart to and fro. In addition, there are the eyes of the *keruvim* of might and the wheels of the *Shekhinah*, which are similar to torches of light and the flames of burning coals. This man then trembles, shakes, moves to and fro, panics, is terrified, faints, and collapses backwards. Anaphiel the prince and sixty-three watchmen of the seven gates of the palace support him, and they all help him and say: “Do not fear, son of the beloved seed. Enter and see the King in His magnificence. You will not be slaughtered and you will not be burnt.”

Hekhalot Rabbati 24:2–3, in *UJM1* p.78

At this, the initiate bursts forth in a hymn of praise, which is an acrostic with a hypnotic rhythm that puts him into a trancelike state. Possibly this duplicates one of the repetition practices that created the concentration needed to enter the inner realms. The hymn is an endless repetition of praises of God as king:

Illustrious King, glorious King, masterful King, blessed King, chosen King, luminescent King, distinguished King, heroic King, sublime King, omniscient King, remarkable King, disciplining King, splendiferous King, majestic King, affluent King, eternal King, aristocratic King, infinite King, memorable King, worthy King, radiating King, living King, merciful King, pious King, valuable King, chaste King, righteous King, esteemed King, redeeming King, astounding King, adorned King, worshipped King, sympathetic King, commanding King, fervent King, comprehending King, possessing King, prosperous King, gilded King, faithful King, resplendent King, secretive King, wise King, modest King, benevolent King, patient King,

embellished King, rescuing King, virtuous King, joyous King, radiant King, sanctified King, esoteric King, commended King, revered King, compassionate King, moderate King, attentive King, tranquil King, serene King, ornamented King, perfect King, supportive King. Blessed be He.

King of the king of kings, God of gods, and Lord of lords,
 who is surrounded with chains of crowns,
 who is encompassed by the cluster of the rulers of radiance,
 who covers the heavens with the wing of His magnificence,
 and in His majesty appeared from the heights –
 From His beauty the deeps are kindled,
 and from His stature the heavens are sparked.

His stature sends out the lofty,
 and His crown blazes out the mighty,
 and His garment flows with the precious.
 And all trees shall rejoice in His word,
 and herbs shall exult in His rejoicing,
 and His words shall drop as perfumes,
 flowing forth in flames of fire,
 giving joy to those who search them,
 and quiet to those who fulfil them.

Hekhalot Rabbati 25:1, in UJM1 pp.79–81

Experience in the Merkavah

Before an individual could embark on the *merkavah*, he had to purify himself. He had to give up all types of negative behaviour and be faithful to all the biblical and talmudic commandments. Rabbi Ḥai Gaon (939–1038) writes of the prerequisites for attempting the *Merkavah* practice and of the required posture and concentration techniques:

You may perhaps know that many of the sages hold that when a man is worthy and blessed with certain qualities and he wishes to gaze at the heavenly chariot (*merkavah*) and the halls (*hekhalot*) of the angels on high, he must follow certain exercises. He must fast for a specified number of days, he must place his head between his knees, whispering softly to himself the while certain praises of God, with his face towards the ground. As a result, he will gaze in the innermost recesses of his heart and it will seem as if he saw the seven halls (*hekhalot*) with his own eyes, moving from hall (*hekhal*) to hall (*hekhal*) to observe that which is therein to be found.

Ḥai Gaon in Ozar ha-Geonim, OGL4 pp.13–15, in SBJT p.32

Rabbi Nathan of Rome, who recorded the teachings of Ḥai Gaon in his *Aruch Completum* (*Sefer ha-Arukh ha-Shalem*), explains that through this practice, the mystics experienced a contemplative vision of the *merkavah* in the innermost recesses or “chamber of their heart”:

They did not ascend on high, but rather in the chamber of their heart they saw and contemplated (*ro'in ve-zofin be-hadrei libban*) like a person who sees and contemplates something clearly with his eyes; and they heard and spoke with a seeing eye (*'ein ha-sokheh*) by means of the holy spirit.

Nathan ben Yehiel, Aruch Completum 1:14, ATTM, in TSSW p.146

In other words, these early mystics were able to develop their faculty of inner vision and penetrate spiritually within themselves to a higher state of consciousness. Often, they would practise their meditation in a group (*havura*). In a passage from the *Hekhalot Rabbati*, the author describes such a gathering at which Rabbi Neḥuniah explains the process of the *merkavah* ascent and descent:

Then, the (following men) came: Rabban Sim'on ben Gamaliel, Rabbi Eli'ezer the Great, Rabbi El'azar ben Damah, Rabbi Eli'ezer ben Shamu'a, Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Dahavai, Ḥananya ben Ḥaniḥai, Yehonatan ben Uzziel, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Yehudah ben Baba. We (all) came and sat before him while the mass of companions (*haverim*, initiates) stood on their feet, for they saw that globes of fire and torches of light formed a barrier between them and us. Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Kanah sat and explained to them everything concerning the matters of the *merkavah*: the descent to it and the ascent; how to descend, who should descend; how to ascend, and who should ascend.

Hekhalot Rabbati 16:3; cf. in UJMI p.60

The Realm of the Merkavah in the Kabbalah

The ecstatic experiences of the *Merkavah* mystics were later reflected in the writings of the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*, a mystical movement of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany, and in kabbalistic literature. Among the latter, the most significant text was the thirteenth-century *Zohar*, believed to have been written in Spain by a group led by Rabbi Moses de León. In the *Zohar*, the author describes the realm of the *merkavah* (*'olam ha-merkavah*). He visualizes the ten *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) as a kind of chariot or vehicle by which God can be realized. In fact, he describes an upper chariot and a lower chariot, each made of the *sefirot*, the lower chariot supporting the one above. In this way, the *Zohar* depicts symbolically how an individual's

realization of the various qualities of the divine Unity leads to realization of the supreme Being Himself, seated on His throne.

In the hierarchical system of the inner realms or *'olamim*, as described in the *Zohar*, the *'olam ha-merkavah* corresponds to *'olam ha-briah*, the realm of creation, which is akin to the causal realm of more modern terminology, since it is from here that the creation is generated. In kabbalistic literature, it is often called the 'womb' of the creation, and consists of the seven palaces or halls originally described in the *Merkavah* writings. This realm acts as a bridge between the lower realms and *'olam ha-aẓilut* (realm of emanation), which is the spiritual realm just below the supreme Godhead. Each of its 'halls' is a reflection of particular *sefirot* in the realm of emanation.

In the *Zohar*, the realm of the *merkavah* is also called the 'upper' Garden of Eden, and is the place where pure souls exist in delight. Below and parallel to it is the 'lower' Garden of Eden, *'olam ha-yeẓirah* (realm of formation), equivalent to the astral realm, also with seven halls. According to the *Zohar*, this is the realm where Adam dwelt, before his expulsion and descent into *'olam ha-ʿassiah* (material realm).⁶

Even before the writing of the *Zohar*, in the early thirteenth century Rabbi 'Azriel of Gerona wrote that in *'olam ha-merkavah*, the seventh or highest hall is called the 'holy of holies'. It is the abode of the *Shekhinah* (the divine indwelling presence) and the region of the throne of glory.

The Later Course of Merkavah Mysticism

In many cases, although the original purpose of *Merkavah* mysticism was to induce an ecstatic condition of the soul, it was transformed into occult and magical practices, such as 'using the Name' or 'clothing oneself in the Name', in an attempt to control divine forces. In such practices, the attributive names of God were used as a kind of magic formula. Sometimes, practitioners would address the 'prince of the *Torah*' or other personified inner beings. 'Magical' uses of psalms, as well as other religious texts, were also used. Such practices were considered dangerous and negative by the more orthodox rabbis.

In other instances, in later rabbinic literature, *Merkavah* mysticism took a different direction. Mystical ascent on the *merkavah* became a form of personal repentance and return to God, in which an individual is himself regarded as the *merkavah*, and his ascent through the different palaces or *hekhalot* represents stages in his moral and spiritual purification. Later kabbalists such as Abraham Abulafia used the term *merkavah* to signify the human body, within which the devotee makes the journey through the inner regions to a vision of the Divine. Rabbi Isaac Luria speaks of the attainment of the *merkavah* state through the meditation practice of *hitbodedut* (inner seclusion).

The imagery of the *merkavah* also suggests obedience to the will of a higher power, much as a physical chariot is always guided by the will of its driver.

Thus the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were described as *merkavah* for God, since they were solely concerned with obedience to the divine will.

See also: **cherubim** (4.2), **hekhalot**, **sulam ha-‘aliyah** (►4).

1. See *Ezekiel* 1:4–28.
2. Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, KGS p.6.
3. *Ezekiel* 10:1–5.
4. *1 Kings* 19:12.
5. *Hekhalot Rabbati* 22:2–3, in *UJMI* p.73.
6. *Zohar* 1:153b, *ZPMI* p.298; *Zohar* 2:13a–b, in *WZ2* pp.745–47; see also Isaiah Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, *WZ2* pp.588, 591–92.

mettā bhāvanā (Pa) *Lit.* meditation (*bhāvanā*) on lovingkindness (*mettā*); cultivation of benevolence, goodwill. *Mettā* is one of the four *brahmavihāras*, four classical meditation topics (*kammaṭṭhāna*) mentioned frequently in the Buddhist Pali *suttas*, and also listed in the analytical *Abhidhamma* and associated literature as four of the forty meditation objects and topics. *Bhāvanā* means cultivation or development by means of thought – hence mental cultivation or meditation. It is an active endeavour to develop those noble qualities, in this case lovingkindness, that are essential to fruitful meditation. See **brahmavihāra**.

miànbì (C) (J. *menpeki*) *Lit.* to face (*miàn*) a wall (*bì*); wall gazing; as a common expression, to devote oneself to work, study, or some other important task or activity; found in several Chinese texts on inner cultivation of the spirit; in Chinese Buddhism, where *miànbì* is also called *bìguān* (wall contemplation), to sit facing a wall in meditation. The term is associated with Bodhidharma, an Indian Buddhist missionary who came to China during the fifth or sixth centuries CE, and is widely regarded as the founder of Chinese *Chán* Buddhism. In Daoism, *miànbì* carries the broader meaning of spiritual practice in general, which includes sitting in meditation as well as simply having a still, clear mind.

According to the traditional story, Bodhidharma lived for nine years (*jiùnián*) in a cave near the Shàolín Temple (Shàolínsì) at Mount Sōng in Hénán province in northern China, where he sat in meditation facing a wall. In her poem *Miànbì*, master Sūn Bù’èr (C12th) describes something of the state experienced:

Put an end to all things of the world:
sit in stillness in a small niche.

The body becomes light riding on the purple energy –
 your (true) nature is purified and the pond becomes clear.
 The energies of *yīn* and *yáng* merge into one,
 spirit is one with heaven and earth.
 The work is done,
 and you ascend to the jade palace (*i.e.* the highest realms).
 Constant whistling emerges from the mountain mist.

“Miànbì,” *Sūn Bù’èr yuánjūn fǎyǔ*, ZW370, JY203

In a commentary on this poem, master Chén Yīngníng (C20th) refers to the Bodhidharma legend, suggesting that *miànbì* should not be taken literally, but should be understood rather as a metaphorical expression for ‘working on stillness’. Master Chén Yīngníng also confesses his own failure to reach the spiritual heights eventually attained by master Sūn Bù’èr, but advises others to persevere and patiently await personal experience in years to come:

The expression “facing a wall (*miànbì*)” began with Bodhidharma. In the sixth century, Bodhidharma stayed at Shàolín Temple in the Sōng mountains. He sat facing a wall for the whole day, every day, for nine years. So later Daoists who practise stillness all call the exercise “facing a wall”....

When the ancient sages reached this phase of refinement, most of them chose to live in caves deep in the mountains. They kept the entrance of the cave blocked to avoid being harmed by wild beasts, or being disturbed by people, or to avoid the need to keep guard. But in present times, this method is not necessarily appropriate.

A common way is to build a couple of huts in a clean and quiet place in the woods and mountains, where people following the same path can live. Next, make a small shrine from wood, big enough for one person to sit in, with soft, thick cushions, and a door that opens at the front. The other three sides should be well ventilated but not breezy, and are best covered with woven bamboo strips, like those used on sedan chairs.

Sit inside for however many days or months it takes, until the *yáng* spirit (*yángshén*) emerges from its coverings. Only then will the practice be successful. But it is necessary to remain vigilant at all times to guard against the unexpected....

Even nowadays there is no lack of people experiencing this phenomenon. I have seen them in person, but could not tell what spiritual powers they had. Maybe this is what is spoken of in the scriptures as ‘having wisdom but not using it’....

In the past thirty years of searching for the *Dào*, I have not seen what the *yáng* spirit (*yángshén*) looks like or how it emerges. Even

my masters did not mention it, except by saying, “You will automatically know when the time comes.” Therefore, due to my lack of real experience, I dare not offer any comment on how things function after the emergence of the spirit.

If a seeker can truly practise the exercise of “facing a wall (*miànbì*)”, why worry that the spirit will not emerge? Just remain calm, and wait for the time when you can experience it yourself.

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù'èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù, SBNN

Some Daoist teachers see ‘wall-gazing’ as less about where and how one sits for meditation, and more about maintaining the mind like a blank wall – *i.e.* still, calm, and without discrimination or attachment to thoughts and emotions. In other words, “a firm, unshakable, non-dual contemplation”.¹ Facing the inner wall of the mind (which conceals the *Dào*) requires disciplined determination and undistracted focus. At first, the practice may be boring and frustrating, yet, with great effort (“nurturing”), there will be a spiritual breakthrough. Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) describes the state of *miànbì*:

Facing a wall (*miànbì*) refers to a state of being like a wall ten thousand fathoms high, independent of all things, still, not differentiating and not discriminating, annihilated in the (primordial) Void (within). The spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*, innate spiritual potential and awareness) is revealed and transformed; body and spirit (*xíngshén*, ‘body and soul’) both become sublime; you merge with the truth of the *Dào*. The greater the nurturing, the greater the attainment; one becomes a devotee of heaven.

Liú Yīmíng, Zhōuyì (26) chǎnzhēn, ZW245, DS13

In one of his ‘twenty-four secrets of alchemy’, master Liú Yīmíng describes the result of “nine years facing a wall” as silently transcending being and nonbeing, becoming a “saint (*shèng*)”, and returning to the Void – the realm of the immortals:

Nine years (*jiǔnián*) facing a wall (*miànbì*) –
 being and nonbeing alike do not exist,
 all of creation returns to the Void (*kōng*).
 Nine years (*jiǔnián*) facing a wall (*miànbì*) –
 who knows about this?
 The work of entering a room
 does not involve thinking.
 When the creation returns to the Void,
 human beings become saints (*shèng*) –

They depart for the realm of the Void
where the immortals (*xiān*) reside.

Liú Yīmíng, Dānfǎ èrshísì jué 23, in Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, *fl.* C16th) recommends guidance from an enlightened teacher in order to learn from him the secrets and subtleties of the path to *Dào*-realization. Anyone wishing to attain this union should first learn to still and empty the mind in order to cultivate the spirit and realize what is already within; and the meditation practice required to attain this state he calls *miànbì*:

Attaining the *Dào* means to enter the true way and to obtain instructions from an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*). Learn the meaning of the ‘one opening of the mysterious gate (*xuánguān yī qiào*)’, the ‘gathering of the six spirits (*liùshén huìhé*)’, ‘laying the foundation (*zhùjī*)’, ‘gathering the medicines (*cǎiyào*)’, ‘to cultivate the elixir (*liàndān*)’... To cultivate the spirit, learn to face the wall (*miànbì*). Only if you obtain these instructions will you receive the *Dào*.

Although it is said that you ‘attain’ the *Dào*, you are really receiving nothing at all. The mysterious gate, the singular cavity and all the treasures described are already within the body, not anywhere else. That is why it is said that you will receive nothing; for you possess them from the beginning. If you want to attain the *Dào*, you must train and discipline yourself. You must be steadfast like stone and iron, and you must not waver. ... Your will must be centred, or you will abandon the path along the way. You must detach yourself from fame, fortune, possessive love, liquor, sexual pleasure, and emotions. You must cut them off with a sharp knife. You must cultivate yourself from within. Then you will receive the *Dào*.

Shuǐjīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (14) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM pp.89–90

Miànbì is essentially synonymous with *bìguān* (wall gazing, wall contemplation). Some ancient texts use only one of these terms while others use both. The *Xù gāosēng zhuàn* (‘Further Biographies of Eminent Monks’), composed in 664 CE by the Buddhist monk Dàoxuān, uses only *bìguān*, understanding it as contemplation rather than sitting in a particular posture. In the Buddhist *Jīngdé chuándēng lù* (‘*Jīngdé* Era Records of the Transmission of the Lamp’, *c.* C11th),² both *bìguān* and *miànbì* are found, together with another synonym *miànchiáng*.³

In general, ‘facing a wall (*miànbì*, *miànchiáng*)’ or ‘wall contemplation (*bìguān*)’ means to turn away from all that captures the attention in the phenomenal world and to focus it elsewhere – to turn away from phenomena and to turn inward and engage with what is beyond material phenomena.

Rather than specifying a particular period, ‘nine years’ (and also ‘three years’) simply signifies a long period of time. Other adepts are also said to have meditated for ‘nine years’ before attaining enlightenment.

See also: **bìguān**, **jiǔhuán** (8.1), **jiǔnián**.

1. See *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, EVP p.106.
2. *Jǐngdé chuándēng lù*, T51 2076.
3. See *Essays Into Vietnamese Pasts*, EVP p.106.

monologistos euchē (Gk) *Lit.* single-word (*mono-logistos*) prayer (*euchē*); also as *euchē monologistos*; one-word prayer, single-phrase prayer, single thought prayer; a short prayer dwelt upon or repeated over and over in the mind in order to concentrate the mind, and withdraw it from the world, especially the prayer of Jesus.

The first author to apply the adjective *monologistos* to prayer was probably John Klimakos (c.579–649), who also seems to have been the first to use the term, the ‘Jesus prayer (*Iēsou euchē*)’. In his *Ladder of Ascent*, he speaks of the *monologistos Iēsou euchē* (single-phrased prayer of Jesus). Let it be, he advises, a constant companion:

Let the remembrance of death and the single-phrased prayer of Jesus (*monologistos Iēsou euchē*) go to sleep with you and get up with you, for nothing helps you as these do when you are asleep.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 15; cf. LDAC p.178

He also describes the process of recalling the mind to the prayer, whenever it wanders away. He counsels, “Wrap your thought within the words of your prayer”:

Make the effort to raise up, or rather, to wrap your thought within the words of your prayer; and if, like a child, it gets tired and falters, raise it up again. The mind, after all, is naturally unstable, but God, who can do everything, can also give it firm endurance. Persevere in this, therefore, and do not grow weary. . . . The beginning of prayer is the expulsion of distractions from the very start by a single phrase (*monologistos*); the middle stage is concentration on what is being said or thought; its conclusion is rapture in the Lord.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28; cf. LDAC p.276

Since *monologistos* can mean both ‘single-worded’ and ‘single-phrased’, it is uncertain whether John Klimakos recommended a prayer of just the one word, “Jesus”, or – as became customary – a one-sentence prayer such as

“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me, a sinner.” However, it seems more likely that he repeated a phrase or short sentence, since he speaks of the “words” of the prayer. He further adds:

Pray in all simplicity. . . . In your prayers there is no need for high-flown words, for it is the simple and unsophisticated babblings of children that have often won the heart of the Father in heaven. Try not to talk excessively in your prayer, in case your mind is distracted by the search for words. . . . Many-worded prayer (*polylogia*) frequently distracts the mind and deludes it, whereas brevity (*monologia*) makes for concentration. If it happens that, as you pray, some word evokes delight or remorse within you, linger over it.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28; cf. LDAC pp.275–76

John’s disciple, Hēsychios, whose writings are preserved in the *Philokalia*, frequently speaks of the prayer of Jesus. On one occasion, he also calls it the *monologistos euchē*, which provides protection against attack by the “demons”:

The single-phrased prayer (*monologistos euchē*) destroys and consumes the deceits of the demons. For when we invoke Jesus, God and Son of God, constantly and tirelessly, he does not allow them to project in the mind’s mirror even the first hint of their infiltration.

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 174, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.193

Some centuries later, Ilias the Presbyter (C12th) similarly speaks of the *euchē monologistos*:

Evidence of a mind (*nous*) devoted to God is its absorption in the single-phrased prayer (*euchē monologistos*). . . . The single-phrased prayer (*euchē monologistos*) bridles unruly thought. . . . The spiritual aspirant must restrain his senses through frugality, and his mind (*nous*) through the single-phrased prayer (*euchē monologistos*). Having in this way detached himself from the passions, he will find himself caught up to the Lord during prayer.

Ilias the Presbyter, Gnostic Anthology 2:94, 4:65, 75; cf. PCT3 pp.44, 56–57

The Romanian Orthodox Christian priest, theologian and professor Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993) describes how, with practice, this *monologistos euchē* becomes more than simply a repeated prayer; it develops into an awareness of the Divine:

The fathers speak of prayer as consisting of a single thought (*monologistos euchē*). Strictly speaking, it is not even a thought, but rather

an awareness of being totally absorbed in the reality of God. One can, nevertheless, call this conscious experience ‘thought’, because it is not simply a state of confused feeling or the sensation of being lost in the ocean of inarticulate Reality, but it is awareness of encounter with the personal infinity of God who loves us. It is the mind’s confirmation of the Reality.

Dumitru Stăniloae, Prayer and Holiness 2, PHI p.10

See also: **ceaseless prayer, prayer of Jesus, prayer of the heart.**

mortification The practice of self-denial and ascetic disciplines in order to subjugate the passions and the bodily nature, and thereby to purify the mind; the practice of austerities; asceticism, self-mortification; prevalent to some extent in all religious traditions, but finding its most extreme expression in Christian, Hindu, and Jain traditions; more generally, any event, practice or inner effort that mortifies or humbles the mind; from ecclesiastical Latin, *mortificare* (to put to death, to kill, to subdue), from *mors* (death) + *facere* (to do).

Christian writers have exhibited a wide range of opinion regarding ascetic practices. Theodoros the Great Ascetic (C9th) presents the aim and rationale behind them: to contemplate spiritual truths; and he notes specifically that any such mortification needs to be accompanied by prayer:

The body desires to enjoy through the senses what is akin to it; and the stronger it is, the stronger its desire. But this conflicts with the soul’s purpose. So the soul must make every effort to curb the senses, so that we do not indulge in sensory realities. . . . But since the stronger the body, the stronger its desire; and the stronger its desire, the harder it is to check, the soul must mortify the body through fasting, vigils, standing, sleeping on the ground, going unwashed, and through every other kind of hardship, thus reducing its strength and making it tractable and obedient to the soul’s spiritual activities. . . . Our aim is the contemplation of spiritual realities and total aspiration towards them. The mortification of the flesh, together with the fasting, self-restraint and other things that contribute to it, are all practised as a means to this end. And in their company is prayer.

Theodoros the Great Ascetic, Theōrētikon, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 p.45

More specifically, Gregory of Nyssa writes that it is impossible for the divine Word to dwell in the soul unless the veil of the body is first torn away by its mortification:

It is impossible for the living Word to be present in us – I mean that pure, invisible Spouse who unites the soul to Himself by sanctity and

incorruptibility – unless, by the mortification of our bodies on earth, we tear away the veil of the flesh, and in this way open the door to the Word that He may come and dwell in the soul.

Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 12, PG44 cols.1016c ff.; cf. GGG p.254

To Brother Lawrence, on the other hand, such practices were only useful if they served to bring the soul into contact with the Divine. In fact, to achieve this end, he personally found the exercise of love to be far superior to “bodily mortifications”. A monk who made a record of several conversations with Brother Lawrence reports him as saying,

that all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless, unless they serve to arrive at union with God by love; that he had considered this well, and found the continual exercise of love, and doing all things for His sake, to be the shortest way to go straight to Him. . . . That all possible kinds of mortification, if they were devoid of the love of God, could not efface a single sin.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Conversations 2; cf. PPGL p.13

In fact, it is the mind in the body, rather than the body *per se*, that requires purification. As the saying goes, there is no use beating the kennel to punish the dog. Hence, François de Sales says that although people are impressed by severe mortification of the body, in fact, “gentleness, kindness and modesty, and other mortifications of the heart . . . are more sanctifying”.¹ Teresa of Ávila also points out that “interior mortification” – resisting one’s “own will and desire, even in small things” – is of a higher kind than bodily deprivation and discipline:

Why do we shrink from interior mortification, since this is the means by which every other kind of mortification may become much more meritorious and perfect, so that it can then be practised with greater tranquillity and ease? This . . . is acquired by gradual progress and by never indulging our own will and desire, even in small things, until we have succeeded in subduing the body to the spirit.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 12, CWT2 p.49

In a similar vein, Thomas à Kempis observes that the outer dress and appearance of a monk mean little compared to the mortification or death of the passions within:

The habit and tonsure by themselves are of small significance; it is the transformation of one’s way of life and the complete mortification of the passions that make a true religious.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 1:17, ICTK p.45

To mystics, the inner is always of far greater significance than the outer.

See also: **asceticism, austerities, fasting** (8.4).

1. François de Sales, *Devout Life* 3:1, IDL p.90.

mòzhào Chán (C), mokushō Zen (J) *Lit.* silent (*mò*) illumination (*zhào*) meditation (*Chán, Zen*); a form of seated meditation that uses no devices or aids; sitting with a silent and concentrated mind, letting go of concepts, thoughts and images, with no goal other than realization of one's own innately perfect *buddha*-nature and consequent liberation; a practice generally said to have been introduced by Hóngzhì Zhēngjué (1091–1157) into the Chinese *Cáodòng* school (founded in the ninth century) and introduced to Japan in the thirteenth century as the similar *shikantaza* (J. nothing but just sitting) meditation of the *Sōtō* school.

Mòzhào Chán is founded upon the *Mahāyāna* teaching of *tathāgata-garbha*, which teaches that the *buddha*-nature is present in all beings and that enlightenment is the inherently natural state of mind. As a consequence, all that is required is for the meditator to relinquish all striving, and permit this enlightened state of mind to come to the fore.

By the latter half of the ninth century, the *Cáodòng* and *Línjì* schools were an established part of the 'five houses' of *Chán* Buddhism, and during the early years of the *Sòng* dynasty (960–1279), they became the most prominent of the five. The *Línjì* school, also founded in the ninth century, favoured the use of surprise or 'shock' techniques, notably shouting at students, hitting them with a stick, and other unexpected behaviour. By the tenth century, the shock techniques of the *Línjì* school had also been augmented by the use of *gōng àns* (*kōans*), which consisted largely of anecdotes, or the essential aspects of them, often concerning how certain masters of the past had attained enlightenment.

Western scholars have generally said that during the twelfth century differences between the meditation practices of the two schools resulted in a controversy between masters Dàhuì Zōnggǎo (1089–1163) of the *Línjì* school and Hóngzhì Zhēngjué (1091–1157) of the *Cáodòng*. Recent Japanese scholars on the other hand have presented evidence that in fact cordial relations existed between the two, that they remained good friends, and that Dàhuì's criticisms of silent illumination were not focused on Hóngzhì, but on Zhēnxiē Qīngliǎo (1088–1151), a fellow student of Hóngzhì. Indeed, although Dàhuì does criticize the practice of silent illumination in many of his writings, there is no evidence that Hóngzhì responded in kind.¹

Whatever the truth, it seems clear that the two terms *mòzhào Chán* and *kānhuà Chán* came into existence at this time, and that divisive vestiges of the dialogue between the two schools that promoted these practices enveloped

them both for many generations afterwards. The substance of the differences was Dàhuì's teaching that meditation should be goal-oriented and practised with great effort and energy. He maintained that the passive nature of silent illumination (*mòzhào Chán*) promoted mental laziness among its practitioners. Hóngzhì, on the other hand, observed that since the innate *buddha*-nature is present in everyone, all that is required is to remain still and let that reality manifest itself. In his view, meditation is self-fulfilling, a realization of something already present, rather than a goal-oriented quest for something currently absent. Hóngzhì therefore believed that contemplation of a *gōng àn* (known as *kānhuà Chán*), with its ethos of effort and its goal of understanding the *gōng àn*, introduced the dualism of ignorance and enlightenment, which stood in the way of enlightenment.

Hóngzhì summarizes this perspective in his poem *Mòzhào Míng* ('Silent Illumination Inscription'). He is perfectly clear in this poem and his other writings, however, that silent illumination does not mean that the practitioner should let himself fall into a state of mental dullness and inertia. When sitting in silent illumination, he writes, "total clarity appears before you." When all striving ceases and all thought processes end, complete transcendent enlightenment and wisdom is experienced. But this is not a negative state. Meditation requires presence, alertness, and brightness of mind. In this state, not only will the innate *buddha*-nature manifest itself, but the being of the meditator will become one with the entire universe, and full understanding of everything will be manifest to him:

In complete silence (*mòmò*), words are forgotten:
total clarity appears before you.
When you reflect it, it is boundlessly vast,
and your body becomes spiritualized (*língrán*).

Spiritualized (*língrán*), it is illuminated without relying on anything,
in illumination (*zhào*), you return to the transcendent (*miào*).
The dewy moon on the Milky Way,
the snow-clad pine on the cloudy peak. . . .

The endless aeons are completely empty,
all things are exactly the same.
Transcendent wisdom (*miào*) exists in a place of silence (*mò*),
striving for achievement is forgotten in illumination (*zhào*).

Where does transcendent wisdom exist?
Alertly, we destroy murkiness.
The path of silent illumination (*mòzhào*)
is the basis for leaving the world of delusion. . . .

All the myriad things in the universe
 emit radiance and speak the *Dharma*.
 They all attest to each other
 and individually correspond in dialogue.

Corresponding in dialogue and attesting,
 they respond to each other perfectly.
 But if in illumination (*zhào*) silence (*mò*) is lost,
 then aggressiveness will appear.

Attesting and corresponding in dialogue,
 perfectly they respond to each other.
 But if in silence illumination is lost,
 then you will become turbid and leave behind the *Dharma*.

When silence (*mò*) and illumination (*zhào*) both
 are operating and complete,
 the lotus flower opens and the dreamer awakens.
 The hundred rivers flow into the sea,
 and the thousand peaks face the great mountain. . . .

Our tradition's teaching of silent illumination (*mòzhào*)
 penetrates to the highest peak and the deepest deep.
 Our bodies are emptiness (*shūnyatā*),
 our arms form the *mudrā* (sacred hand gesture).

Beginning and end are parts of the one Principle,
 through transformation they become the ten thousand differences.
 Mr Hé offered jade (*i.e.* perfection),
 Xiāngrú pointed out its flaws.

The different Buddhist teachings are all on the same level,
 the marvellous function (of skilful means) has no need to strive.
 An emperor dwells within the palace walls,
 while a general stays outside the fortifications.

The teachings of our tradition
 are on mark and hit right in the centre.
 Transmit it out in all directions,
 make no delay in expounding it.

Hóngzhì, "Mòzhào Míng" 1–2, 4–5, 10–13, 15–18,
 in *Hóngzhì guānglù*, T48 2001:100a26–b14; cf. in HZZS pp.145–47

There is no hint here of criticism of other methods; Hóngzhì only extols the virtues of the method he has tried and experienced. Dàhuì, on the other hand, frequently resorts to criticism. As he advises one of his high-ranking educated followers:

When you deal (with the world), just deal with it; if you want to practise quiet sitting (*jìngzuò*), just sit quietly. But when you sit, do not become attached to sitting and make it the ultimate. Recently, a bunch of false teachers has been misleading followers by making silent illumination (*mòzhào*) and quiet sitting the ultimate *dharma*. Unafraid to take them on, I have strongly criticized them, in this way trying to repay the blessings of the Buddha and cure the ills of the final *dharma*.

Dàhuì, “Second Letter to Vice Minister Chén,”
in Dàhuì yǔlù, T47 1998A:923c22–26, in DMZM p.103

Whatever the truth concerning the differences between the two schools, it is apparent that the practice of *gōng àn* contemplation (*kānhuà*) proved more appealing to the laity than *mòzhào*. Maybe this was because the human mind is habitually active, and simply sitting and trying to hold it completely still is far more difficult than occupying it with some more definitive mental activity such as *kānhuà*. But whatever the reason, by the end of the *Sòng* period, the *kānhuà* practice of the *Línjì* school had become the most popular meditational method among the laity. In fact, with the exception of the *Cáodòng* school, the other Buddhist schools had by that time been largely absorbed into the *Línjì*. After the end of the *Sòng* period, with the rise of Neo-Confucianism among the intelligentsia, Buddhism went into decline and the various *Chán* schools absorbed elements of each other, losing their distinctive characteristics, although modern *Chán* remains more closely aligned to the *Línjì* than any of the other schools.

In the thirteenth century, the practice of *mòzhào* was introduced to Japan by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253, founder of the school of *Sōtō Zen*), who had studied in China with Tiāntóng Rújīng of the *Cáodòng* school. During the same period, a number of other Japanese monks travelled to China to study under *Línjì* masters. Among these was Myōan Eisai (1141–1215), who founded the *Rinzai* school on his return to Japan.

Dōgen’s Japanese name for his version of the practice of *mòzhào* was *shikantaza* (J. nothing but just sitting). Discussion concerning the relative merits of *shikantaza* and *kannazen* have continued between the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools. Among the critics of Dōgen’s *shikantaza* have been Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768), Japanese reformer and revitalizer of the *Rinzai* school who systematized *kōan* practice in a manner still used today, and the renowned twentieth-century scholar D.T. Suzuki. Both these two critiqued *shikantaza*

as quietism, negativism and mental stasis, praising instead the mental power and spiritual insight claimed for *kōan* meditation.

In his own time, Dōgen remained unshaken by the criticism, remaining convinced of the efficacy of *shikantaza*. It is said that he regarded with particular admiration another of Hóngzhì Zhēngjué's poems in praise of silent illumination, the *Zuòchán zhēn* ('A Needle for Sitting Meditation'):

Essential function of all the *buddhas*,
 functioning essence of all the patriarchs –
 It knows without touching things,
 it illumines (*zhào*) without facing objects.
 Knowing without touching things,
 its knowledge is inherently subtle;
 Illumining (*zhào*) without facing objects,
 its illumination (*zhào*) is inherently mysterious.
 Its knowledge inherently subtle,
 it is ever without discriminatory thought;
 Its illumination (*zhào*) inherently mysterious,
 it is ever without a hair's breadth of sign.
 Ever without discriminatory thought,
 its knowledge is rare without peer;
 Ever without a hair's breadth of sign,
 its illumination (*zhào*) comprehends without grasping.
 The water is clear right through to the bottom,
 a fish goes lazily along.
 The sky is vast without horizon,
 a bird flies far far away.

Hóngzhì, "Zuòchán zhēn," in Hóngzhì guǎnglù,
 T48 2001:98a29–b5, in DMZM p.100

The practice of silent illumination has remained prevalent to the present day. The Chinese Buddhist monk Master Sheng-yen (1930–2009) describes three phases of "silent illumination" according to his experience:

Broadly speaking, silent illumination (*i.e.* *mòzhào*) practice can be organized into three stages of development. Of course, this is a provisional scheme that I use to convey the basic principles of the practice. One should be careful not to take these representations to be clearly marked plateaus that every practitioner must traverse or for which every practitioner must aim. Responses to the practice will vary from individual to individual, and progress itself may involve many subtle gradations of experience.

The first of the three stages centres on the practice of ‘just sitting’ – just attentively minding your body, poised in the posture of seated meditation. The second stage entails an expansion of one’s field of awareness from the body to the external environment. Distinctions between the body and one’s surroundings dissolve, so that one sits with bald awareness of this larger, expanded field in the same way that one previously attended to the seated body. In the third stage, subtle reifications of self and object disappear, and everything is present except you. There are no thoughts of self, no dualistic oppositions between self and external environment, and no discriminating or self-grasping thoughts. Hear something, and it is as though nothing is heard. See something, and it is as though nothing is seen. Yet the mind is perfectly clear and unclouded.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB pp.152–53

The first stage, he elaborates, focuses the attention entirely on the meditation posture. This can be done either in a relaxed or a vigorous manner. The vigorous or energetic style is suited to beginners in good health. An active frame of mind helps to ward off inertia and drowsiness. The relaxed style is for the more advanced practitioner or for someone who is not in good health. But there are no hard and fast rules, and the two can be alternated, even in a single sitting. The purpose is to get in the habit of ‘just sitting’ in balance and equipoise of both mind and body:

Your sole concern should be just to sit and to experience yourself as sitting, right in that moment, with total body-mind awareness. Individual sensations will come and go, but they should be experienced as an integral part of this whole. With this body-mind whole as the ground of concentration, such sensations will neither disrupt nor distract you.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB p.153

During the second stage, the meditator may experience light and sound, together with a sense of emptiness and vastness. But these are all preliminary experiences:

At this second level of the second stage of ‘just sitting’, various extraordinary experiences may occur. One such state is the experience of infinite light – an indescribable kind of light, in which the light itself is you, and there is a sense of oneness, a sense of infinite space, and utter clarity. A second type of experience is that of infinite sound. This is not the familiar sound of cars, dogs, or particular things in the world. It is a primal, elemental sound that is one with the vastness and

seems to come from the origin of the universe itself. A pure sound that is unlike any music that you have ever heard before, it is a rich and perfect harmony that comes from all places at once, without any point of origin or reference. I call these the experiences of infinite light and infinite sound.

A third kind of experience that may arise at this deeper level of oneness is that of emptiness or voidness. Although this sounds like the emptiness of no-self and self-nature that we identify with enlightenment, it is not the same. This is an experience of a pure vastness of space in which nothing at all seems to exist. It may seem that self and object no longer exist, that this is an experience of no-mind; but actually this ‘nothingness’ is itself still conditioned by a subtle sense of selfhood and object.

In point of fact, all three of these experiences are products of the purified state of mind that comes with mundane *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. They belong to the level of great or expanded self, not to the supramundane forms of *samādhi* that come with insight into true emptiness and no-mind. When you experience such states, it is imperative that you not become attached to them, much less mistake them for enlightenment itself. As you emerge from them, say to yourself, “This is not what I am seeking.”

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB pp.156–57

In this second stage, there still remains a subtle sense of self, of an observer even of the Absolute. In the third stage, the meditator moves into a deeper state of consciousness, approaching and ultimately including that of enlightenment itself, in which all sense of self has dissolved:

The third stage of silent illumination practice is exceedingly difficult to describe, since it is the inconceivable enlightenment of no-mind itself. At this stage, there is no distinction between practice and realization, nor is there separation between meditative concentration and enlightened insight. The mind is forever unmoved by causes and conditions and free from the illusory thought of self, yet the mind still perceives and responds fully to the needs of others. In so doing, there is nothing artificial, nothing forced or unnatural in its operations. Its wisdom manifests spontaneously in response to whatever arises.

Yòngjiā Xuānjué (665–713), a disciple of the sixth patriarch Huìnéng, wrote two lines in a longer poem that are useful for helping us understand this third stage of matured silent illumination practice: “In the midst of using the mind, there is no mind to be used; in not using the mind, there is using of the mind,”² “No mind to be used” refers to the ‘silent’ aspect of silent illumination. “In not using mind, there is using of mind” refers

to the aspect of ‘illumination’. In both lines there is neither subject nor object, attachment nor rejection. In the second stage of silent illumination practice, one experiences a kind of non-opposition between self and environment, but there remains a subtle sense of an Absolute, of a Oneness. Implicit to this objectification, there is impediment, attachment, and selfhood. At the third stage, true freedom from opposition and impediment appears; there is no subjective self, no objective environment, nor is there any subtle sense of a reified Absolute. In this state, all dualistic opposition and constraint truly cease. You can interact with the environment without affliction and self-clinging, no matter what circumstances confront you. All things are fully present, and whatever tasks need to be accomplished, are accomplished. By the same token, there is not a hint of self-attachment in this activity – there is just the free functioning of wisdom.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB p.157

Master Sheng-yen then again points out that the stages he has described are only broad brushstrokes for the sake of providing some idea of what to expect. Individually, experiences are likely to be different:

This outline of the different stages and experiences of silent illumination may seem quite formulaic. However, it is important to realize that we construct it in order to explain the dynamics of the practice, not to imply that there is a hard and fast rule of progression from one stage to the next. In actual practice the order and delineation of the various stages may not be that clearly defined. Moreover, responses to the practice will vary considerably from one meditator to the next. The important thing is not to hanker after specific experiences, but to understand the principles behind this practice so that you may learn to apply it properly, to the best of your ability.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB p.158

Because the mind is constantly busy and needs to be kept occupied, even in meditation, most practitioners find *mòzhào Chán* or *shikantaza* difficult to practise. For this reason, some modern *Zen* teachers in the West have created a synthesis of the different meditation techniques practised by the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools, namely, counting breaths, *shikantaza*, and *kōan* contemplation (*kānhuà Chán*).

See also: **kānhuà Chán, kōan, shikantaza.**

1. Morten Schlütter, “Before the Empty Eon,” in *KTZB* p.169.
2. *Chánzōng Yǒngjiā jí*, T48 2013:389b.

mu‘āmalah (A), **mu‘āmalat** (P) (pl. *mu‘āmalāt*) *Lit.* transaction, dealing, business, affairs, work; good conduct, good behaviour, good works, ethics; in Sufism, spiritual practice, meditation; the inner practices required for the soul to experience various mystical states (*aḥwāl*) and rise to increasingly higher mystical stations (*maqāmāt*).

Rūzbihān speaks of increasing the purity of spiritual practice by first overcoming human “imperfections”. When this is accomplished, mystical experiences occur spontaneously in the spiritual “heart”:

The purity of spiritual practice (*ṣafā’ al-mu‘āmalah*) may be acquired only after shedding the human imperfections that spring from your physical nature, so that the heart may, of its very nature, become immune to base and evil maladies. After this, the lights of gnosis appear out of the Beauty of the Known One, and the purity of spiritual practice (*ṣafā’ al-mu‘āmalah*) is made perfect by the splendour of gnosis.

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 2:34, MARB p.41; cf. in SSE10 p.7

Rūzbihān goes on to describe spiritual practice as the journey of the heart towards God as it crosses the “realm of the Unseen” – the inner worlds:

Whenever the wayfarer becomes purified through divine well-being, his spiritual practice (*a‘māl*) involves the heart’s journey through the realm of the Unseen. Here, the journey towards God is undertaken with the highest aspiration, projected by God’s will into His wayfarers. According to the *Qur’ān*: “Then, let the practitioners practise (*‘amal*).”¹

Al-‘Arif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “The performance of spiritual practice (*mu‘āmalah*) helps you to sustain states (*ḥālāt*) and to conceal your discovery of things unseen.”

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 3:3, MARB p.46; cf. in SSE10 p.7

Mu‘āmalah, says Rūzbihān in his discourses, is the path that leads to spiritual “stations”, which in turn lead on to increasingly higher mystical experience:

Spiritual practices (*mu‘āmalāt*) are the pathways to stations (*maqāmāt*), from which appear the paths to visionary disclosures (*mukāshafāt*), which, in turn, are the gateways to witnessing (*mushāhadāt*). In God’s customary procedure, the way of gnosis first concerns stations, which, though fundamental in the early stages, are merely embellishments for the stable states of the final stages. Spiritual practice (*mu‘āmalat*) is like the outer form, while state (*ḥālāt*) is like the soul (*jān*); the outer form cannot do without the soul, and *vice versa*.

Each state is in its own right a form of spiritual practice (*mu‘āmalat*) in the inner consciousness (*sirr*), bringing comfort to the souls of

wayfarers. Do not think that the wayfarer is free from the need for spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*), for this is a grave error. People often think of spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) as being external, not involving a knowledge of inner realities, including the reality of spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*). This is incorrect. Where there is no end to state, so there is no limit to spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) until one reaches the point where state and spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) alike disappear. This is the annihilation of annihilation (*fanā-yi fanā*).

Now, the reality of spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) is of seven kinds, each being the foundation of a corresponding state: repentance, abstinence, asceticism, poverty, patience, trust in God, and contentment.

Rūzbihān, Risālat al-Quds, RQR p.41; cf. in SSE10 pp.7–8

The struggle to overcome impurity at any level is also regarded as spiritual practice:

Spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) is of three kinds: that of ordinary people, involving purification of the body; that of the elect, involving cleansing of the spirit (*rūḥ*); and that of the elect of the elect, involving sanctification of the inner consciousness (*sirr*).

Rūzbihān, Risālat al-Quds, RQR p.46; cf. in SSE10 p.8

Some Sufis, such as Abū Ḥafṣ Ḥaddād of Nīshāpūr and Abū al-Ḥasan Nūrī, as quoted by Hujwīrī, have described *mu'āmalāt* almost entirely in terms of good conduct and behaviour at the human level.² Anṣārī has a similar viewpoint:

Spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) involves three things: depriving oneself, being fair to others, and living honestly with God. Well-intentioned spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*) in turn, has three cornerstones:

1. Being fair, which is motivated by justice. This is made possible by three things: having contempt for oneself, being fearful of divine punishment, and striving to the limit of one's capabilities.
2. Giving generously, which is motivated by liberality. This is made possible by three things: fleeing from meanness, seeing the nobility of selflessness, and knowing the Sought One.
3. Self-sacrifice, which is motivated by grace. This is made possible by three things: choosing unity instead of conflict with creation; choosing eternal over transitory happiness; and choosing everlasting nobility over preoccupation with this world.

Anṣārī, Ṣad Maydān 17, SMA pp.26–27, in SSE10 pp.8–9

Putting things simply, in the manner of a poet, Sa'dī points out that it is easy enough to discourse or write learnedly on spiritual matters. But for real understanding, inner experience is required:

Others can tell the same stories as I;
However, having no spiritual practice (*mu'āmalat*),
they do not know what they are saying.

*Sa'dī, Kulliyāt, Ṭayyibāt 177:11, KSMF (216) p.641,
OSSS p.213; cf. in SSE10 p.7, TOS p.242*

See also: 'amal.

1. *Qur'ān* 37:61.
2. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* III, KMM p.47, KM pp.41–42.

mu kōan (J), **wú gōng àn** (C) *Lit.* the 'no' *kōan*. The Chinese *wú*, phonetically rendered in Japanese as *mu*, is a negative prefix or part of speech that means 'no, not, nothing, nothingness, nought, nil, zero, without, un-, has not, is not,' etc. In *Chán* and *Zen* Buddhism, *wú* (*mu*) is a famous answer given by master Zhàozhōu Cōngshěn (778–897) to a question posed by a monk according to the well-known *kōan*, "Does a dog have a *buddha*-nature?"¹ In one interpretation, Zhàozhōu's answer highlights the distinction between direct personal experience or realization and knowing the intellectual answer. See **kōan**.

1. *Mumonkan*, Case 1.

mūla-bandh(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* root (*mūl*) contraction (*bandha*); one of the *bandhas* of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

murāqabah (A), **murāqabat** (P) *Lit.* observation, examination, vigilance, watchfulness, attention, supervision; thus, self-examination, self-vigilance, self-observation; also, contemplation, meditation; hence, *murāqabat al-bāṭin* (inner vigilance, inner meditation). In a Sufi context, the term has no single English equivalent, since *murāqabah* generally combines the meanings of both observation and meditation, sometimes implying more of one than the other.

Murāqabah means that, by maintaining an awareness that God is constantly observing him, a seeker keeps careful watch over himself, while at the same time being observant of God both within himself as well as in his daily life. According to a *ḥadīth*, "Beneficence consists in worshipping God as if you can see Him; for even if you cannot see Him, yet He sees you."¹ *Murāqabah*

therefore covers the seeker's self-observation of his states of mind and inner spiritual condition, his observation and awareness of God's presence in his external life, and meditation on his inner awareness of God, all within a context of God's observation of him. *Murāqabah* is both his awareness of God and his awareness of God's awareness.

Murāqabah leads to *qurb* (nearness), or realization of the nearness of God. It is therefore said that the *ahl al-murāqabah* (people of *murāqabah*, those who practice *murāqabah*) hold to the knowledge of God's awareness and thus ward off all negative thoughts. According to the individual, *murāqabah* can range from a superficial and analytical attitude of mind to a far more deeply meditative state of being in which the practitioner becomes absorbed in the inner presence of the Divine:

Shiblī said, "I went over to Nūrī's and saw him sitting in meditation (*murāqabat*) such that not a hair on his body moved. I asked, 'From whom did you learn such fine meditation (*murāqabat*)?'"

"He replied, 'From a cat crouching by a mouse hole; and he was much stiller than I.'"

'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* 2, TAN2 p.52, in SSE10 p.25

Ibn al-'Arabī relates the term to one of the ninety-nine names of *Allāh*, *al-Raqīb* – the Observer, the Vigilant, the Examiner – He who notices everything. He writes of "three types of observation":

There are three types of observation (*murāqabah*) by the servant, one of which cannot take place, while the other two can take place. The observation (*murāqabah*) which cannot take place is the servant's observation (*murāqabat al-'abd*) of his Lord. He (the servant) does not know His Essence nor His relationship to the cosmos, so the existence of this kind of observation (*murāqabah*) cannot be conceived, since it depends upon knowledge of the Essence of the One who is observed.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:208.34, FMIA3 (2:126) p.314; cf. SPK p.348

He goes on to add, however, that there are those who do consider the observation of God to be possible, since God is manifested in all things, and therefore the observation of anything is observation of God. According to this reasoning, God can be observed because He is manifest in all things:

Hence, we know Him in this measure and observe Him to this extent. Hence, our observation (*murāqabah*) of things is identical with our observation (*murāqabah*) of Him, since He manifests Himself from everything.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:208.34, FMIA3 (2:126) p.314; cf. SPK p.348

Ibn al-ʿArabī, however, believes that in practice this viewpoint is impossible to adopt. He continues:

The second kind is the observation (*murāqabah*) of shame (*ḥayāʾ*), based upon the words of God, “Does he not know that God sees?”² The servant observes His seeing while He is seeing him. . . .

The third kind of observation (*murāqabah*) is that the servant observes his heart and his inward and outward self to see the signs of his Lord within it. Then he acts in accordance with the signs of his Lord which he sees.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:208.34, FMIA3 (2:126) p.314; cf. SPK p.348

In a later passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī reiterates that God can never be observed. One who thinks he is observing God is only observing his own beliefs and concepts about God, not God Himself:

He is the Observer, not the observed. He is the Preserver, not the preserved. That which man preserves in his heart is only his belief. That is what He embraces of his Lord. So if you observe, know whom it is that you observe. You will never leave yourself, and you will never know anything but your own essence, since the temporally originated thing never becomes connected to anything but that which corresponds to it, and that is what you have of Him. What you have is temporally originated, so you will never be free of your own nature.

In reality, you worship nothing but what you have set up in yourself. That is why the doctrines concerning God are diverse. . . . One group says, “He is like this.” Another group says, “He is not like that, He is like this.” . . . So consider the bewilderment that pervades every believer.

*Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:211.29,
FMIA3 (2:127) pp.318–19; cf. SPK p.349*

Tahānawī explains *murāqabat* as keeping the heart from negative tendencies through the awareness of God’s omnipotence and omnipresence:

According to the followers of the spiritual path, *murāqabah* means the preservation of the heart from evils. It has been said, further, that it means being aware that God has power over all things. In its true sense, *murāqabah* is the worship of God in such a way that the wayfarer senses that God sees him; for even if he does not sense that, God sees him just the same.

Murāqabah is of two kinds: the common, which is fear of God, and the elect, which is hope in Him, as well as wanting that which God

wants, respecting that which God respects, minimizing that which God minimizes, and observation of the inner consciousness in its contemplation of God....

It has also been said that *murāqabah* is the *nafs*' (lower mind) shedding of reliance on its own power, the awaiting of God's grace and contentment, and turning away from what is other than God. It is immersion in the ocean of desire for Him and longing to behold Him. It begins with restraining oneself from opposing God and ends with focusing on the true Observer (*Raqīb*) in the course of contemplation (*mushāhadah*)....

When Ibn 'Aṭā' was asked about the best form of worship, he replied, "Meditation (*murāqabah*) on God at every moment."

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT2 pp.182–83; cf. in SSE10 pp.25–26

The great systematizer, Rūzbihān, relates *murāqabah* to meditation at the level of inner being that Sufis call the heart (*dil*):

The connection of the *nafs* is with spiritual practice (*ṭā'ah*), the connection of the heart (*dil*) with contemplation (*murāqabah*), the connection of the spirit (*rūḥ*) with witnessing (*mushāhadah*), the connection of the inner consciousness (*sirr*) with direct observation (*mu'āyanah*), and that of the body with the creation of the men of God. So, whenever these connections become perfected in the wayfarer, the result is connection with the mercy that comes from the Merciful.

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 4:13, MARB p.70, in SSE11 pp.75–76

Jurjānī summarizes it simply:

Murāqabah is the servant's constant awareness that God is aware of all his states.

Jurjānī, Ta'rīfāt, KTJ p.189; cf. in SSE10 p.25

Shāh Dā'ī Shīrāzī says that *murāqabah* is giving attention to one's inner being:

Just what is the disciple's meditation (*murāqabat*)?

It is concern for his inward being.

It means casting his eyes down and becoming accustomed to the world that is within.

Dā'ī Shīrāzī, Kullīyāt 1544–45, KSDS1 p.97; cf. in SSE10 p.24

Muḥāsibī defines *murāqabat* as awareness of God's "nearness (*qurb*)":

Meditation (*murāqabat*) is the heart's awareness in nearness (*qurb*) to God.

Muḥāsibī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' 1, TAN1 p.227; cf. in SSE10 p.24

Ruwaym describes it as the heart's awareness of the Beloved:

When Ruwaym was asked about meditation (*murāqabah*), he explained that it "is the realization of the heart in beholding the Beloved".

Aṣṣārī, Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah 194, TSAA p.219, in SSE10 pp.24–25

And Maghribī says that it is the best of all activities:

The most gracious of acts is to cultivate your spiritual moments through meditation (*murāqabat*).

Maghribī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' 2, TAN2 p.117, in SSE10 p.25

1. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:2.47, 6:60.300; cf. *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1:1, 4, 6, *HSM*.
2. *Qur'ān* 96:14.

nafs-kushī (P) *Lit.* self-mortification (*nafs-kushī*), self-denial, the crushing of the ego. 'Ināyat Khān says that this is the primary endeavour of the Sufi. By so doing, the "thorns" of negativity in human nature become the "roses" of the virtues:

In Sufi terms the crushing of the ego is called *nafs-kushī*. And how do we grind it? We grind it by sometimes taking ourselves to task. When the self (*nafs*) says, "Oh no, I must not be treated like this," then we say, "What does it matter?"

When the self says, "He ought to have done this, she ought to have said that," we say, "What does it matter, either this way or that way? Every person is what he is; you cannot change him, but you can change yourself." That is the grinding.

When a thorn shows itself, and you grind it as soon as you notice it, that same thorn by being crushed will turn into a rose, for the thorn also belongs to the rose bush. And when a person says, "I will not occupy this position; I will not eat this; I hate it; I despise it; I cannot bear it; I cannot look at it; I cannot endure it; I cannot stand it" – these are all little thorns. A person may not know it, but they are thorns, and when they are crushed, then the rose comes out of it.

How easy it is for people to say they want to know about mysticism and occultism. If there were an even bigger name, they would like to take an interest in that, and they believe that by reading books one

can understand it, by learning lessons one can learn it, or by doing certain practices one can know it. But it is the everyday life that teaches us from morning till night. Every moment of the day and night, we are up against something that our *nafs* rebels against; and if we took that opportunity to crush it, to put it down, in some years' time our personality would become a rose.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK7 pp.270–71

He also suggests some simple ways to practise such “self-control”:

The way to gain self-control is first of all to do the reverse of what your inclination would lead you to do. If you feel inclined to eat, sometimes do not eat, control the hunger. If you feel inclined to drink, do not drink, control the thirst. If you are inclined to sleep, do not sleep; at another time when you are not inclined to sleep, sleep. There are a thousand inclinations; each sense has its inclinations. Do not give way to these inclinations; rule them, that they may not govern you. This is called by the yogis *haṭha yoga*, and the Sufis call it *nafs-kushī*.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK8e p.43

names, names of the rulers, five names Names or words repeated by the mind in order to focus or concentrate the attention at the single eye, and to bring it into contact with the divine light and sound within, by which it is drawn up to higher regions of consciousness; a *mantra* or verbal formula; names given by a master to his disciples for the purpose of mental concentration; also called recollection, repetition, or remembrance. The twentieth-century Indian mystic, Maharaj Sawan Singh explains:

The method, as was explained to you at the time of initiation, is the simplest when compared with other methods. This has been followed and recommended by the past masters. It is natural, within all, designed by God, and as old as the creation itself.

Because our attention in the long, long past lost touch with the Sound Current (*i.e.* Pu. *Shabd Dhār*), and got attached to the mind and the physical world, adopting forms of life according to the actions performed, it has become materialized in a way and now finds it difficult to detach itself from the material world, vacate the nine portals of the body and concentrate in the eye centre, thereby dematerializing itself and becoming fit to make contact with the Sound Current again, and enter the mental plane.

The simplest way to dematerialize the attention is *simran* (Pu. remembrance, repetition) – the repetition of the five names by the

attention in the eye centre. When the attention is engaged in the eye centre in this repetition, it begins to withdraw itself from the world and from the extremities of the body, leaving them numb. As the practice increases, leaving the whole body numb, the attention concentrates in the eye centre and enters a new world.

This method is natural with us, as everyone in this world is engaged in repeating words – a farmer is mentally making use of words connected with his work when he thinks of his fields and bullocks and plans agricultural operation; a housewife thinks in words connected with what is in stock in the house and what is to be purchased for the table; a lawyer thinks in words connected with his cases. In this method of concentration, by repeating words in the eye centre, there is no change in our daily habit; only new words have been substituted, thereby changing the subject matter but not the habit. The words we use in concentration refer to nothing in the external material world but refer to our spiritual journey within us.

Therefore, let there be no doubt about the simplicity and the efficacy of the method. If followed with faith, love and perseverance, it is bound to give results.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 96, SG pp.126–27

Repetition of the names shifts the focus of attention from outside to inside:

Because our attention has been running wild, outwardly from the eye focus, not only during our present life since our birth but in our previous lives also, so to hold it at the eye focus is an arduous, uphill task. The habit of staying out from the focus has become second nature. But there is no reason why we should not be able to overcome a habit. It only needs effort and determination.

You may have observed that this attention is not permanently attached to any material object in this world. From childhood onward it has had its likes and dislikes. At one time it is attached to friends, at another to family, and so on. It has not stuck to one thing. Herein lies the remedy: the attention is detachable.

So what we do in our method of concentration is to place before our attention the vision of the inner worlds. By repeatedly putting those scenes before it, we bring it again and again into the focus. We are substituting the visions of the inner worlds in place of the outer and material world. *Jyot Niranjan*, for example, when remembered, suggests the idea of candle light and bell sound, inside the eye focus; similarly, other names. The five names thus give us the main features of the path within, and when we remember these, we are, in a way, bringing our attention onto the inner path. It is only a matter of effort,

longing, determination and persistence in the face of failure, when this switching of the attention from the external, material world onto the inner worlds will become easy and a matter of routine. Sticking to the eye focus is essential.

The mind will often run away, and when you find it has run away, bring it back into the focus. Sometimes sleep intervenes. Sleep only means that the mind was withdrawn from the external world, but we did not stick to the focus, and instead the attention sank down to the lower focus – the throat or navel. So bring it up again to the eye focus.

If one sticks to the focus, then the mind, which runs wild in the beginning, slowly and slowly quiets down and it begins to feel as if sticking to the eye focus is not an unnatural thing. The current from the body then slowly begins to move towards the focus. (The body should not be disturbed from the posture.) The first withdrawal is from the extremities – the arms and legs. If the practice is prolonged, the body – the whole trunk – will lose the current, which will collect at the eye focus. Then one will be conscious within but unconscious of one's own body, what to say of the external world.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 145, SG pp.216–18

All words have associations; and were a spiritual master to give his disciples words to repeat that are associated with the activities, things and people of the world, those words would lead the mind into thinking about the world. As a result, the mind would not focus at the single eye, as desired.

Masters who teach this form of meditation therefore give their disciples words or names that have no association with the things of this world. This narrows down the field considerably, and the names that they give are the names of the 'rulers' of the five main spiritual realms, within. The idea is not to start thinking about those rulers at the time of meditation, but so that any association which the mind does have with these names is of an inward nature, for the mind gravitates towards that upon which it dwells.

Different masters have given different names to these five rulers in their various languages and at various times, but the power possessed by these names lies not so much in the names themselves as in the master who has given them. For example, if one boy calls another boy by his name, the one may choose to ignore the other. But if his school headmaster calls out his name, the boy automatically responds. The name spoken is the same in both instances: the difference lies in the one who utters it.

Similarly, with the five names. They are given by a master. They are kept secret so as to avoid confusing others, and to keep their associations sacred in the mind of the disciple. As long as they remain undisclosed, this association is entirely with the master and with the inner regions through which the disciple has to pass on his return to God. Even if a person were to discover

what these names were and to begin the meditation practice, the individual would be unlikely to get very far unless the names came with the permission, blessing, and initiation of a master.

Practically all occult or magical paths, especially of the past, have described ‘names of power’, which are guarded by their holders as great secrets. Whether or not such names, in themselves, actually possess any power, the fundamental idea is correct. Details of these five names and the precise method of their practice have been kept secret from non-initiates in all ages, and even their existence is rarely mentioned in the mystic literature of the past. All the same, there are a few places where there is little doubt that this is what is being discussed.

The Coptic *Teachings of Silvanus*, for instance, has a number of specific references to meditation including explicit mention of “words” as guardians at the gateway of the mind, preventing all thoughts of the world (“robbers”) from gaining entrance to the “city, which is your soul”:

My son, throw every robber out of your gates. Guard all your gates with torches, which are the words, and through them you will gain inner peace. But he who does not use them to guard himself will become like a city that is desolate through being captured. All kinds of wild beasts have trampled upon it, for thoughts which are not good are evil wild beasts. And your city will be filled with robbers, and you will not be able to acquire peace, but only all kinds of savage wild beasts. The Wicked One, who is a tyrant, is lord over these. While directing this, he (the Wicked One) is hidden beneath the great mire. The whole city, which is your soul, will perish.

Teachings of Silvanus 85; cf. NHS30 pp.280–81

This summarizes the battle or labour of repetition of the words. They are used to cast out of the mind all the thoughts that come from the Wicked One (Satan, the power of negativity), who remains unseen behind the turmoil and illusion of the mind, hidden “beneath the great mire”.

From the same era, in a remarkable passage from the gnostic text, the *Pistis Sophia*, also written in Coptic, the author actually gives the names of the five rulers purporting to have been the five names used in those days and in that country, though their authenticity is unknown. The passage does suggest, however, that this technique of meditation has an ancient origin. In this extract, it is said to have been Jesus who is speaking:

“I have told you, for the first time, the names of these five great rulers by which the men of the world are wont to call them. Harken now then that I may tell you also their incorruptible names, which are:

Orimouth corresponds to *Kronos*;
Mounichounaphor corresponds to *Arēs*;
Tarpetanouph corresponds to *Hermēs*;
Chosi corresponds to *Aphroditē*;
Chonbal corresponds to *Zeus*.

These are their incorruptible names.”

And when the disciples had heard this, they fell down, adored Jesus, and said: “Blessed are we beyond all men, because you have revealed unto us these great wonders.”

Pistis Sophia 357:137–38; cf. *PS* pp.714–15, *PSGG* p.299

Despite the writer’s assertion that these five names are “incorruptible”, this is clearly not the case. All names that are written or uttered – as are these – are human inventions and have a history in time. They are therefore ‘corruptible’. It is the five sounds – aspects of the divine Word or Voice and associated with the five realms of creation – that are “incorruptible” in the sense that they are unwritten and unspoken, lasting for as long as the creation.

The “names of the five great rulers by which the men of the world are wont to call them” are the names of Greek gods. Possibly, these gods were once described by mystics as the rulers or deities of the various inner realms, like some of the Hindu pantheon, becoming externalized and woven into mythology over the course of time. At least, from this passage and others like it in this ancient literature, it seems that some of the mystically minded in Jesus’ times interpreted the Greek gods in this way. *Zeus*, the Father of the gods, for example, was used as a name for the supreme Being, and so on.

A number of the gnostic texts of this period also mention “five seals” that refer to initiation into the path of the five sounds. These seals also bore important names to be used by the initiates in meditation, as a passage from the gnostic *Trimorphic Protennoia* makes clear:

He who possesses the five seals with their particular names
 has stripped off the garments of ignorance
 and put on a shining light.
 And nothing will come before him (inside)
 that belongs to the powers of the *archons* (rulers).
 Within people of this sort,
 darkness will dissolve and ignorance will die.

Trimorphic Protennoia 49; cf. *GS* p.100, *NHS28* pp.430–31

The writer says that he who has been given the initiation of the “five seals”, together with their five “particular names” is enabled to leave the body and the lower aspects of the mind (“garments of ignorance”) behind. For them

all darkness and ignorance will be dissolved and no inner power can stand in their way.

The passage highlights another purpose of the five names: “Nothing will come before him (inside) that belongs to the powers of the *archons* (rulers).” The five names are used by a disciple when traversing the inner realms to test any spirits or beings that come before him. No negative power can stand in their presence. As Maharaj Sawan Singh writes:

When you feel the presence of the disembodied spirits, repeat the five names revealed to you. Evil spirits do not stay when those five names are repeated, and thus they would not be able to deceive you. Only good spirits stay, and the spirit that stays when these names are used is worthy of your trust. Converse freely with it.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 37, SG p.67

Even in daily life, repetition of names or words with a spiritual association has the power to calm the mind not only of the initiate but also of those around him, to a greater or lesser extent. Such names are a great protective force and a very powerful help under all circumstances.

Indications of this mystic purpose are also to be found in other gnostic writings. In the *Second Book of Jeu*, one group of rulers and administrators of the inner regions are called the “watchers”, and Jesus says:

Then the watchers of the gates of the Treasury of the Light see the mystery of the forgiveness of sins which you have performed. . . . And they see the seal on your foreheads, and they see the cypher in your hands. Then the nine watchers open to you the gates of the Treasury of the Light, and you go into the Treasury of the Light. The watchers will not speak with you, but they will give you their seals and their mystery.

Second Book of Jeu 118–19:49, BC pp.164–65

The “seal on your foreheads” is the initiation, while the “cypher in your hands” refers to the names. Equipped with these, a soul is enabled to pass through all the regions. The soul may have no communication with these rulers or watchers, but they give their permission, so to speak, for the soul to pass through their realms, because the soul has the sign of the highest authority – that of the divine Word.

See also: **mantra, sumiran.**

namu Amida Butsu (J) *Lit.* homage (*namu*) to the Buddha (*butsu*) of Infinite Light (Amida, S. Amitābha); hail or praise to Amida Buddha; a *mantra*

recited by Japanese Pure Land Buddhists to evoke the help of the celestial *buddha* Amitābha (J. Amida). Amitābha is believed to assist his devotees by appearing to them at the time of their death and by helping them attain rebirth in his western pure land of utmost bliss (S. *sukhāvatī*, J. *gokuraku*). The practice of reciting this *mantra* is known as *nembutsu*. See **nembutsu**.

Namu myōhō renge kyō (J) *Lit.* praise (*namu*) to the *Sūtra* (*kyō*) of the Lotus (*ren*) Blossom (*ge*) of the Wondrous (*myō*) Dharma (*hō*); chanted daily by devotees of the many branches of the *Nichiren* school of Japanese Buddhism. The full Sanskrit title of the *Lotus Sūtra* is *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* ('Lotus *Sūtra* of the True Dharma'), of which the Japanese *Myōhō renge kyō* is a translation. The *Lotus Sūtra* is also known to the *Nichiren* school as *daimoku*, meaning 'title' (of a book), which, by extension, has become the common name for the chant. See **daimoku**.

Nā ro chos drug (T), **Nādapāda-dharma** (S) *Lit.* six (*drug*) doctrines (*chos*) of Nāropa (T. Nā ro, S. Nādapāda); the six topics or *dharmas* of the Indian Buddhist *mahāsiddha* (great adept) Nāropa; a sequence of Tibetan Buddhist tantric (*Vajrayāna*) practices or meditation techniques transmitted by the Indian Buddhist *mahāsiddha* Tilopa (988–1069) to his disciple Nāropa (c.1016–1100), who transmitted them to his disciple Marpa Lotsawa (1012–1097). Traditionally, it is said that Marpa then passed the teachings on to his disciple Milarepa (1052–1135), and Milarepa's disciple Gampopa organized them into the *Kagyū* school, although the early history of the origins and transmission is probably more complex than this.

According to traditional legend, Tilopa received the teachings of the six doctrines from Chakrasaṃvara, a celestial *buddha* and one of the principal *yi dams* (meditation deities) of *anuttara-yoga tantra*. Tilopa is also regarded as the founder of the *Mahāmudrā* ('Great Seal') tradition, a collection of practices intended to hasten the process of enlightenment. He is said to have received the *Mahāmudrā* teachings in a vision during meditation on Buddha Vajradhara, the primordial *buddha* according to the *Geluk* and *Kagyū* schools of Tibetan Buddhism. *Mahāmudrā* and the six doctrines of Nāropa have remained the central doctrines and practices of the various subdivisions of the *Kagyū* school.

Nā ro chos drug is frequently mistranslated as the 'six *yogas* of Nāropa'. In fact, Tilopa's original Sanskrit text concerning the six *dharmas*, which was translated into Tibetan by Nāropa and Marpa, is called *Shad-dharma Upadesha* ('Instruction on the Six *Dharmas*'). However, the mistranslation is now so widespread that the work is often referred to as the 'six *yogas*'. The six *dharmas* are different from the six *yogas* listed in the *Kālachakra Tantra*, which are: *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal from the senses), *dhyāna* (contemplation),

dhāraṇā (concentration), *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath and subtle life energies), *anusmṛiti* (remembrance), and *samādhi* (absorption). Though these six aspects of spiritual practice are common in yogic and tantric literature, they are used in this context for particular *Kālachakra* exercises, and bear no relationship to the six *dharma*s of Nāropa.

There are several variations of the six doctrines of Nāropa, the most common being:

1. *Gtum mo* (S. *chaṇḍālī*). *Lit.* fierce woman (*gtum*); also transliterated as *tummo*; the inner heat produced by control of the body's subtle life energy (*prāṇa*, *vāyu*) by means of breath control and visualization; a practice originating in Indian tantrism, also found in the *Lamdre*, *Kālachakra* and *Anuyoga* schools of *Vajrayāna*; a part of the perfection or completion stage (*nishpanna-krama*) of *anuttara-yoga tantra*. *Gtum mo* practice consists of visualizing fire, the sun or a glowing ember in the navel centre (*maṇipūraka chakra*) of the subtle body, which is the centre associated with the fire (*tejas*) element (*tattva*). When performed correctly with direction of the subtle life energy, heat is generated, which is channelled into the central *nāḍī*, for which reason it is also called 'mystic heat' or the 'practice of inner heat'. There are a number of documented demonstrations of *gtum mo* practitioners surviving for extended periods of time in extremely cold temperatures, even when seated outdoors. The practice has become known in the West through translations of the biography of Milarepa.¹ In the traditional account, Tilopa taught the practice of *gtum mo* to Nāropa after Nāropa had fallen into ice-cold water while helping his master to cross a stream.² See **gtum mo**.
2. *Sgyu lus* (S. *māyādeha*, *māyākāya*). *Lit.* illusory (*sgyu*) body (*lus*, *kāya*, *deha*); illusion (*māyā*) body; also transliterated as *gyulü*; a name given to a range of practices that result in: the realization that one's own body and all phenomena are an illusion created by one's own mind; awareness of one's own subtle body; and the creation of a subtle emanated body that serves as a channel for the primordial, pristine mind or awareness (*rig pa*) that is regarded as the foundation of all mind, all consciousness, and all phenomena. See **sgyu lus**.
3. *Rmi lam* (S. *svapana*). *Lit.* dream (*rmi lam*); also transliterated as *milam*; a practice in which the meditator first learns to recognize dreams as dreams and to remain conscious while dreaming, subsequently coming to realize that the world itself is also a dream, still of the mind, but of another kind; also called dream *yoga*; akin to lucid dreaming, although lucid dreaming lacks the spiritual element. *Rmi lam* is also used metaphorically for the unreal or dream-like nature of worldly (*laukika*) existence. See **rmi lam**.

4. 'Od gsal (S. *prabhāsvara*, Pa. *pabhassara*). *Lit.* radiant (gsal) light ('od), clear light; also transliterated as *odsal*; also called 'luminosity yoga', 'light yoga', or 'clear light yoga'; a practice based upon the understanding that the deepest and most fundamental level of the mind (*rig pa*) is intrinsically pure and radiant, having two primary characteristics – radiance (S. *prabhāsvara*) and emptiness (S. *shūnyatā*). The notion of an inherently luminous mind, commonly regarded as the equivalent of *buddha*-nature, has been a part of Buddhism since *Theravāda* times, later adopted into the *Mahāyāna* (especially *tathāgata-garbha* teachings) and tantric schools. See **prabhāsvara**.
5. *Bardo* (S. *antarābhava*). *Lit.* intermediate state; also transliterated as *bardo*; a practice intended to train the meditator to withstand the disorienting experiences of the intermediate state between death and rebirth, presenting the dying person with an opportunity for great spiritual transformation that allows the trained consciousness to influence the quality of its future rebirth. See **bardo** (8.3).
6. 'Pho ba (S. *saṃkrānti*). *Lit.* transference, change of place; also transliterated as *phowa*; transference of consciousness; a practice intended to separate consciousness from the body through a subtle opening at the top of the head (S. *brahmarandhra*), and which, when practised as close as possible to the time of death, makes it possible for the practitioner to avoid the *bardo* (intermediate) state and go directly to one of the Buddhist pure lands (heavens), such as the popular *sukhāvatī* (land of bliss), the western pure land of Amitābha Buddha. By means of this practice, it is believed that enlightenment is also possible at the time of death by merging into the *dharmakāya* (Reality body) of the Buddha. Although originally a part of the six doctrines, the practice has been adopted by all Tibetan Buddhist schools. It is also practised by the Buddhist laity and by the *Bön* tradition. A variant of 'pho ba – 'pho ba grong 'jug (resurrection transference) – is also described, in which a practitioner transfers his consciousness into a recently deceased body, effectively bring it back to life by inhabiting it. This practice is generally used in the event of 'premature' death, so that the meditator can continue his meditation in a human body. See **'pho ba** (8.3).

The first four *yogas*, known as 'root *yogas*', are generally thought to result in liberation during the present life. It is not deemed necessary for the six *dharmas* to be practised together, but when done so they are regarded as a complete path to enlightenment. Six *dharmas* with the same names are also attributed to the Indian *yoginī* Niguma, thought to have been the wife or sister of Nāropa, although the emphasis is different. Niguma is reputed to

have passed on the teaching to a Tibetan disciple, Kyungpo Naljor Tsültrim Gönpö, who founded the *Shangs pa* lineage of the *Kagyü* school.

See also: **siddha** (7.1).

1. *The Life of Milarepa*, *LMTT* pp.74, 87, 117, 129, 175, 195.
2. Cf. Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche, *Lifestory of Nāropa*, *LSN2*.

Nāth(a) yog(a), Nāth(a) sampradāya (S/H) *Lit.* the *yoga* or tradition (*sampradāya*) of the *Nāths*; an essentially tantric school of *yoga*, with many sub-schools or *guru*-lineages, that rose to prominence in northern India, Nepal, Bengal and Assam around the eleventh century CE; traditionally believed to have been founded by Matsyendranāth (probably c.C8th–10th CE), and developed extensively by his later follower, Gorakhnāth (C11th–12th CE). A *Nāth* or *Nāth sādhu* has hence come to mean a particular kind of advanced yogi belonging to the *Nāth* school or its tradition (*sampradāya*). The terms *nātha* (lord, protector), *siddha* (perfected one) and *mahāsiddha* (great perfected one, liberated being) are used interchangeably throughout a number of associated Hindu and Buddhist schools of tantrism and *yoga*.

Matsyendranāth is revered by both Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists (also known as tantric or esoteric Buddhism) as one of the eighty-four *siddhas* or *mahāsiddhas*, a part of whose duty it is to look after the welfare of humanity by spreading the message of *yoga* and meditation. He is regarded as the author of *Kaula-jñāna-nirṇaya* ('Discussion of the Knowledge of the *Kaula* Tradition'), one of the earliest-known Sanskrit texts on *haṭha yoga*. He is also called *Vishvayogī* (universal yogi, world teacher), because his teachings are inclusive, available to everyone, regardless of religion, caste, or social standing. The intermingling of Hinduism and Buddhism in the tantric tradition is well-documented.

The *Nātha sampradāya* probably evolved from the *siddha* or *avadhūta sampradāya*, an ancient lineage of *gurus*, whose origins are traditionally traced to the legendary and possibly mythological *avadhūta*, Dattātreya. The *Nātha sampradāya* is traditionally regarded as being divided into twelve sub-schools, sects or *panths*, but there are few distinguishing features, and many more than twelve groups and schools whose *gurus* trace their spiritual ancestry to Matsyendranāth. There are also significant variations in the legends concerning the lineage of *gurus* both before and after Matsyendranāth. One account lists six *gurus* between Matsyendranāth and Gorakhnāth, while another identifies Matsyendranāth as the personal *guru* of Gorakhnāth.¹ In modern times there are several *gurus* of the *Nātha* tradition, some of whom have a large following.

The *Nātha sampradāya* is founded upon the traditional relationship of *guru* and disciple, following the transmission of *shakti* (energy) from *guru* to disciple at the time of initiation (*dīkshā*, *shaktipāta*). This initiation is understood to be permanent, and can be neither rescinded nor relinquished. Mahādev Mahendranāth, a modern *Nāth guru* of the *Ādinātha sampradāya*, writes:

The passage of wisdom and knowledge through the generations required the mystic magic phenomenon of initiation, which is valid to this day in the initiation transmission from naked *guru* to naked novice by touch, mark, and *mantra*. In this simple rite, the initiator passes something of himself to the one initiated. This initiation is the start of the transformation of the new *Nāth*. It must not be overlooked that this initiation has been passed on in one unbroken line for thousands of years. Once you receive the *Nāth* initiation, it is yours throughout life. No one can take it from you, and you yourself can never renounce it. This is the most permanent thing in an impermanent life.

Mahādev Mahendranāth, Phantastikos, PSGM

Like the *siddha* tradition, the ideal of ancient *Nāths* was the attainment of perfection and liberation through transubstantiation or etherealization of the physical body achieved by control of the breath and the subtle life energies (*i.e.* *prāṇāyāma*). Through this process of subtle body-cultivation (*kāya-sādhana*) and understanding of the body's subtle constitution and functioning, the *Nāth* acquires the ability to manipulate the forces of nature, the paranormal powers so acquired being known as *siddhis* (perfections). The *Nāths*, especially of the past, are hence renowned for their mastery of *haṭha yoga* and *prāṇāyāma*, and for their miraculous powers – healing the sick, levitation, clairvoyance of various kinds, and so on. It is from this tradition of body-cultivation that the various schools of *haṭha yoga* (forceful *yoga*) have originated, traditionally associated with Gorakhnāth who, it is believed, has been coming to this world for thousands of years. The *siddha* and *Nāth yoga gurus* took no account of caste, and their teachings were adopted by seekers from all levels of society, from kings to paupers.

Traditionally, itinerant *Nāth sādhus* have no beards, shave their heads, pierce their ears, and wear huge earrings, like idols of the deity *Shiva*. Considering themselves to be the descendants of *Shiva*, they roam about, visiting the shrines of *Shiva*. *Shiva* or *Ādinātha* (first lord) is regarded as the first yogi, he who taught *yoga* to humanity, and is regarded as the founder of *Nāth yoga*.

Due to the prevalence and longevity of this yogic or ascetic tradition, a number of Indian *sants* have written of the *Nāths*, *siddhas* and other ascetics

and yogis, pointing out that, from their perspective, God is not to be realized by any outward forms, nor by the variety of spiritual practices involving the body, subtle or gross. In *Siddh Gosht*, a long dialogue between Guru Nānak and a group of *siddhas* and *Nāth yogīs* that occupies several pages of the *Ādi Granth*, the yogis suggest to the *guru*:

Wear the robes of the sect of *yogīs* who follow Gorakh:
 put on the earrings, begging wallet, and patched coat.
 Among the twelve schools of *yoga*, ours is the highest:
 among the six schools of philosophy, ours is the best path.
 This is the way to instruct the mind,
 so you will never suffer beatings again.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 939, AGK

But the *guru* counsels them that, according to his understanding, the way to find God is through contact with the divine Name (*Nām*) or Word (*Shabd* or *Sabad*):

Nānak speaks, the *gurmukh* understands –
 this is the way that *yoga* is attained:
 Let constant absorption in the Word (*Sabad*) deep within
 be your earrings;
 Eradicate egotism and attachment;
 Discard sexual desire, anger and egotism,
 and through the *guru's* Word (*Sabad*), attain true understanding.
 For your patched coat and begging bowl,
 see the Lord God pervading and permeating everywhere.
 O Nānak, the one Lord will carry you across.
 True is our lord and master, and true is his Name:
 analyse it, and you shall find the Word of the *guru* to be true.

Let your mind turn away in detachment from the world,
 and let this be your begging bowl.
 Let the lessons of the five elements be your cap.
 Let the body be your meditation mat,
 and the mind your loincloth.
 Let truth, contentment and self-discipline be your companions.
 O Nānak, the *gurmukh* dwells on the *Nām*.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 939, AGK

See also: **haṭha yoga, siddha** (7.1).

1. G.W. Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpaṭa Yogīs*, GKYB pp.229–31.

naulī-karma, naulī-kriyā (S/H) *Lit.* churning (*naulī*) practice (*karma, kriyā*); one of the six preliminary cleansing practices of *haṭha yoga*, involving rhythmic movements of the abdominal muscles. *Naulī* is a term of uncertain derivation and has been given various interpretations. See **haṭha yoga**.

navayāna (S), **theg pa dgu** (T) *Lit.* nine (*nava, dgu*) vehicles (*yāna, theg pa*); nine ways or paths; the nine-vehicle classification of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan *Vajrayāna* or tantric Buddhism; also called the *theg pa rim pa dgu* (nine successive vehicles); the nine stages on the spiritual path leading to enlightenment, which – according to the *Nyingma* school – encompass the *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Vajrayāna* traditions; mentioned in the *Kulayarāja Tantra* ('All-Creating Sovereign *Tantra*', T. *Kun byed rgyal po*) and in the *General Sūtra of the Gathering of All Intentions* (T. 'Dus pa mdo), the latter being the primary expository teaching concerning *anuyoga* (further *yoga*), which is the eighth of the nine stages.

The nine ways are:

1. *Shrāvaka-yāna* (T. *nyan thos kyi theg pa*), the way of a disciple (*shrāvaka*). See **shrāvaka** (►4).
2. *Pratyeka-buddha-yāna* (T. *rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa*) the way of the solitary (*pratyeka*) enlightened one (*buddha*); the way of those who have attained enlightenment for themselves alone. Although they do not create a community of disciples, they are a source of inspiration to those who come into contact with them and appreciate something of what they have attained. See **pratyeka-buddha** (7.1).
3. *Bodhisattva-yāna* (T. *byang chub sems-dpa'i theg pa*), the way of the *bodhisattva*, of one who is on the path to becoming perfectly enlightened or who may have attained that status, but who, according to the *Mahāyāna* ideal has elected to remain in *saṃsāra* (transmigration) until all sentient beings have become enlightened. See **bodhisattva** (7.1).
4. *Kriyā tantra* (T. *bya rgyud*), which emphasizes the practice of rituals (*kriyā*). See **kriyā tantra**.
5. *Charyā tantra* (T. *spyod rgyud*), which emphasizes the practice (*charyā*) of a balance between *kriyā* and *yoga tantra*. See **charyā tantra**.
6. *Yoga tantra* (T. *rnal 'byor rgyud*) which focuses on yogic and meditative practices. See **yoga tantra**.

7. *Mahāyoga-yāna*, great (*mahā*) union (*yoga*).
8. *Anuyoga-yāna*, further (*anu*) union (*yoga*).
9. *Atiyoga-yāna*, supreme (*ati*) union (*yoga*); also known as *Dzogchen*.

Of these, the initial two are first mentioned in *Theravāda* texts; the third is an ideal introduced by the *Mahāyāna* school; the fourth, fifth and sixth, known as the outer *tantras*, are also common to the three ‘new’ schools (*Kagyü*, *Sakya*, and *Geluk*) of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries CE. The last three are regarded as the inner *tantras*, and specific to the *Nyingma* school.

Since the first three *yānas* are based on teachings found in the *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna sūtras*, they are known as *Sūtrayāna*. *Sūtrayāna* is hence the path of renunciation that is mostly practised by ordained monks of the *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* traditions. It includes: the taking of vows; studying and acquiring a thorough understanding of the *sūtras*; and following a rigid monastic discipline that includes meditation and moral conduct based on the four noble truths and the eightfold noble path.

The remaining six are tantric paths, also called *Tantrayāna* or *Vajrayāna*. *Nyingma* thus contains the fundamental elements of all three of the main Buddhist traditions, although certain aspects may be interpreted in a more spiritual manner. ‘Renunciation’, for instance, which is generally understood as taking up the outer life of a monk or nun, is understood by the *Nyingma* school to imply the transcendence of all duality and a natural awareness of the true nature of Reality.

Atiyoga or *Dzogchen* is regarded as the supreme path, leading to the highest spiritual attainment, the “natural state” of pristine awareness:

For what reasons is *Dzogchen* the highest view? In all of the nine successive ways or vehicles we search for the natural state (*gnas lugs*). But this depends on the capacity of the individual. Each of these nine successive ways has a different view. In general, the method of *sūtra* is the path of renunciation (*spong lam*), the method of *tantra* is the path of transformation (*sgyur lam*), and the method of *Dzogchen* is the path of self-liberation (*grol lam*). So we say that *Dzogchen* is the final or ultimate way.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.108

The *kriyā tantra* is for the lowest,
 the *charyā tantra* is for the low,
 and the *yoga tantra* for those endowed with (higher) consciousness.

For those endowed with the three greater degrees (of intelligence),
 the creation (of *mahāyoga*) is for those who have transcended mind;
 The perfection (of *anuyoga*) is for those having the essence of mind,
 and *Dzogchen* (great perfection) is for (those intent on)
 that which is supreme and most secret.

Great Array of the Highest, in NSTI p.87

It is commonly assumed that most human beings need to begin at a lower level and gradually progress to the higher paths. Of these, some will have followed spiritual paths in past lives, while for others, this may be the first life, so all are at different stages, according to their past history. The lower *yānas* are thus regarded as stepping stones to the higher. Indeed, for some, given their nature and circumstances, the lower paths may be the only ones they have the capacity to follow.

Each of these nine ways or approaches is related to a class of Buddhist texts, and exhibits three fundamental aspects:

1. View (T. *ita ba*), outlook or philosophy, which includes both the specific philosophical concepts of the doctrine as well as the manner in which reality is to be viewed and experienced.
2. Meditation (T. *sgom pa*) practices, which are the means by which the philosophy is to be manifested in the life and experience of the practitioners.
3. Conduct (T. *spyod pa*), which implies the moral code and manner of conduct of each of the nine ways.

Some texts also distinguish an ‘entrance’ as well as a ‘fruition’ to each of the nine paths. ‘Entrance’ refers to the relevant initiation, and ‘fruition’ to realization of the anticipated result or goal of the practices.

Considered in slightly greater detail, the three inner *tantras* are:

1. *Mahāyoga* (T. *rnal ’byor chen po*). The initial phase or process of spiritual transformation by means of meditative practices that focus on the elaborate visualization of deities and *maṇḍalas*, recitation of *mantras*, and so on; equivalent in some respects to the generation, development, or creation stage (S. *utpatti-krama*, T. *bskyed rim*) of tantric practice. Vimalamitra (C8th), one of three Indian monks said to have brought the teaching of *Dzogchen* (great perfection) to Tibet, is credited with having said that the essential philosophy or view of *mahāyoga* is “to see all phenomena, whether of *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa* or the path, as one’s own awareness, the enlightened mind – empty, illuminating, and free of all

elaborations”. The meditation practices are intended to absorb “the mind in the deity” and – moving on to the next stage – to rest “in the completion stage that constitutes the nature of the deity – the state of Reality itself which is beyond the conceptual mind and is devoid of all elaborations”.¹

2. *Anuyoga* (T. *rjes su rnal 'byor*). The completion phase of spiritual transformation by means of meditative practices that focus on control over the body’s subtle life energy (*prāṇa*, *vāyu*) system, which consists of channels (*nāḍīs*) and centres (*chakras*) of *prāṇa*; equivalent in some respects to the completion, perfection, consummation, or fulfilment stage (S. *nishpanna*-, *sampanna*-, or *utpanna-krama*; T. *rdzogs rim*) of tantric practice. The essential philosophy or view is to realize “all dualistic phenomena of both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* to be one’s own awareness, . . . beyond all elaborations”. Concerning the meditation practices, “All of the energetic channels (*nāḍīs*), elements (*bhūtas*, *tattvas*) and centres (*chakras*) are meditated upon as being primordially the *maṇḍala* of the deity.”²
3. *Atiyoga* (T. *shin tu rnal 'byor*). Synonymous with the great or total perfection (*Dzogchen*, *Rdzogs pa chen po*), which is the highest teaching of the *Nyingma* school, beyond *mahāyoga* and *anuyoga*; belongs to the school of thought that believed enlightenment to arise spontaneously.

The *atiyoga* or *Dzogchen* ‘view’ of Reality that is to be realized is a lucid “emptiness – ineffable, without reference point and beyond the intellect”, devoid of analysis and concepts. *Atiyoga* or *Dzogchen* meditation “does not make use of centres of focus or visualization. Rather, it is an uncontrived and focus-free innate lucidity, a spontaneously present and completely perfect evenness, a rootless transparency”:³

The state of mind typifying the *atiyoga* is beyond the scope of conceptual thinking as all distinctions become irrelevant. The adepts of *atiyoga* refrain from doctrinal debates as well as from ritualism as both are based on a distinction-making attitude. The adepts will accept every event in its own right without imposing definitions or judgments on it. In a figurative way, they become speechless in a nameless world of blissful silence in integrated being. For this reason, the *atiyoga* rejects the entirety of Buddhist philosophy, scholasticism, and all formal meditation techniques. All the scriptures of Buddhism are said to be of a meaning that requires interpretation. They are of an ephemeral nature, and their content does not reveal the truth in its finality. In contrast to the scriptures, *atiyoga* is not a teaching taught by the Buddha, it is the matrix of buddhahood.

This state of pure and natural awareness (*rig pa*), also known as the ‘wisdom-mind of the *buddhas*’, is initially conveyed by mind-to-mind transmission from master to disciple, known as an ‘introduction’.

In the various *Nyingma* texts, *atiyoga* describes itself as goal-less. It is beyond subject and object, action and no action, striving, transformation and achieving – for all these imply a perception of reality as dual. *Atiyoga* illumination is understood to be effortless, spontaneous, and instantaneous. If *atiyoga* is deemed to be a path at all, it is described as a path of ‘self-liberation’. *Atiyoga* meditation is the simple recognition of this state of being:

A path to purity that proceeds from level to level
does not agree with the teaching of no action.
If there were truly paths to travel,
one would never reach one’s goal,
just as there is no limit to space...

The bliss of the intrinsically perfect state
is found only in instantaneous presence,
illuminated by the power of matchless wisdom.
Reality does not come from anything else.

Total Space of Vajrasattva, in Treasury of Knowledge 6:4, TK6 pp.25–26

Atiyoga texts and teachings are subdivided into the mind category (*sems sde*), the spatial category (*klong sde*), and the esoteric instruction category (*man ngag gi sde*). According to the mind category, the appearance of all phenomena arises from the transient activities of the mind, from the natural state of non-dual awareness (*rig pa*) or *buddha*-nature overlaid by the veils of human passions and the faulty cognition of phenomena – material or mental. The cognition and perception of phenomena is regarded as a primarily mental activity. Even apparently external objects are in fact perceived or cognized only in the mind. Things are understood to exist only as appearances in the mind.

According to the spatial category, all material and mental phenomena arise as patterns in the infinite, foundational and primordial mind and awareness (*rig pa*) that lies beyond all duality.

According to the esoteric instruction category, this primordial awareness and the associated, essential emptiness of reality should be allowed to manifest spontaneously without effort, without endeavouring to distinguish between one thing and another.

Jamgön Kongtrül describes variations in *atiyoga* meditation that depend upon these three views of Reality:

Meditation according to the mind division is to remain in the state of total presence and emptiness, the dimension of Reality. The vast-space-division meditation is to remain in the state of one’s own true nature

with no action or effort. The esoteric-instructions-division meditation is to remain in the state of primordial freedom, the true nature which is beyond renunciation and acceptance.

Jamgön Kongtrül, Treasury of Knowledge 6:4, TK6 p.345

Atiyoga meditation practices have changed with time. According to early *atiyoga* teachings, all practice entails effort, which results in delusion. Meditation therefore consisted of simply recognizing and maintaining oneself in the pure, luminous (*'od gsal*) and empty (*stong pa*) condition of innately pristine awareness. Later texts, however, influenced by the influx of Indian tantrism, introduced more specific meditational practices. These included meditation on light and darkness, as well as the more obviously tantric practices concerning the control of the body's subtle life energies (*prāṇa*). The three categories of *atiyoga* texts follow this historical development, with the mind category being the earliest and the esoteric instruction category coming later.

Two main forms of *atiyoga* meditation for realizing the pristine awareness are commonly mentioned – 'cutting through resistance (*khregs gcod*)' and 'direct crossing (*thod rgal*)'. In *khregs gcod* meditation, the practitioner identifies that part of himself that is pure, naked, empty awareness, and then endeavours to maintain that awareness at all times. *Thod rgal* meditation is intended to lead to a sudden, spontaneous or direct leap into the state of pristine awareness by means of progression through four stages or visions of the nature of Reality.

The pure awareness thus experienced is also described as primordial liberation (*ye grol*), natural liberation (*rang grol*), direct liberation (*cer grol*), and liberation from limitations (*mtha' grol*).⁴

The early, 'no-method' approach to *atiyoga* is mentioned in such texts as the *Kulayarāja Tantra* ('All-Creating Sovereign *Tantra*'), which insists that nothing is to be done: "One enters (this teaching) through the door of non-striving"⁵ and the "as to great bliss of *atiyoga*, the mind of perfect purity is beyond striving and achieving":⁶

By non-striving you will be spontaneously self-perfected
in what is totally beyond the performance of practices,
and beyond striving and achieving.

Kulayarāja Tantra 4, KBG p.14; cf. SAMB pp.58–59

On the grounds that all other paths are based in one way or another upon dualistic thinking and practice, *atiyoga* texts find fault with the *shrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha* and *bodhisattva* vehicles, with the three outer *tantras*, and with the first two inner *tantras*. For in *atiyoga*, there is no subject or object, no effort and fruition, nothing in need of transformation – all is perceived as one pure mind.⁷ It is for this reason that the early texts say little of any method or practice

by which the state of one, pure pristine mind can be achieved; for the practice of a method would imply a dualism that would cut at the root of the experience.

Traditionally, *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga* and *atiyoga* are said to have been imparted by the celestial, primordial *Ādi-Buddha* Samantabhadra, whose supreme essence is the source of all things. Of these, *atiyoga* is the highest:

The transmission of *atiyoga*,
 the very pinnacle of all spiritual approaches,
 is the highest point of all, like a majestic mountain.
 The greatest of the great, the spacious mind of Samantabhadra,
 overwhelms the eight spiritual approaches by its own power.
 Similarly, awareness is, by its own power,
 an expanse of evenness,
 a supreme evenness,
 a single vast expanse
 in which there is no question of whether or not there is realization,
 whether or not there is freedom. . . .

Since manifest phenomena –
 the world of appearances and possibilities –
 and non-manifest awakened mind
 do not waver from what simply is, unembellished,
 there is freedom from concepts,
 with no framework of limit or centre.
 The nature of openness abides, supreme and uninterrupted.

*Natural Freedom that Underlies Characteristics,
 in Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding, PTWA p.144*

Or as another text admits:

In the inexpressible nature of mind,
 words manifest, yet have no underlying basis.
 I, Samantabhadra, have revealed:
 “This is beyond the scope of expression or imagination.”

Six Expanses, in Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding, PTWA pp.143–44

See also: **Dzogchen, khregs gcod, nishpanna-krama, utpatti-krama.**

1. *Vima Nyingthig*, in *Entrance to the Great Perfection*, EGPD p.243.
2. *Vima Nyingthig*, in *Entrance to the Great Perfection*, EGPD p.244.
3. *Vima Nyingthig*, in *Entrance to the Great Perfection*; cf. EGPD p.246.
4. Gyurme Dorje, *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, Introduction*, NSTI p.38.

5. *Kulayarāja Tantra* 39, *KBG* p.115; cf. *SAMB* p.138.
6. *Kulayarāja Tantra* 38, *KBG* p.111; cf. *SAMB* p.135.
7. E.g. *Kulayarāja Tantra* 35, 38–39, *KBG* pp.104–5, 110–16, *SAMB* pp.129–30, 134–39; see also in *NSTI* pp.296–97.

nèidān (C) *Lit.* inner (*nèi*) cinnabar (*dān*); inner alchemy, inner elixir; a Daoist mystical tradition involving stage-by-stage meditational practices that are aimed at transformation and transmutation of the body and its subtle energy system in order to prolong life and to develop consciousness of the immortal spiritual ‘body’ that survives death; seeks spiritual immortality through the production of a spiritual ‘elixir’, which is awareness of one’s innate spiritual nature; contrasted with *wàidān* (outer alchemy), which seeks to achieve physical immortality through the production of an ingestible material elixir; also called *jīndān dào* (way of the gold elixir), *dāndào* (way of the elixir), or simply *jīndān* or *dān*.

Chinese *wàidān* alchemists experimented with the carefully controlled baking, first of minerals and later of metals in a closed crucible. Many ‘elixirs of immortality’ were produced, the majority based upon the red mineral cinnabar (mercuric sulphide), which releases liquid mercury when roasted and the resulting mercury vapour is condensed. Other elixirs included metals such as gold and silver, or elements like arsenic and sulphur, combined with plant and animal materials such as medicinal herbs and rhinoceros horn. A number of such compounds, far from leading to physical longevity or immortality, were toxic and resulted in the death of the experimenters.

Although clearly a part of the Daoist mystical tradition, evolving syncretically from the Chinese, Daoist and Buddhist philosophical milieu, with a significant tantric element, the historical origins of *nèidān* are uncertain. In modern times, the term *nèidān* covers the entire range of spiritual teachings and meditational practices associated with the tradition, but for much of its history *nèidān* has had a more restricted meaning. The common term for what is now known as the *nèidān* tradition was *jīndān* (gold elixir).

In this wider context, *jīndān* and *nèidān* both refer to the teachings and associated body of literature, to the spiritual practices relating to these teachings, and to the state of original spiritual awareness reached by means of these practices. The growth of this spiritual awareness is known, among other terms, as ‘generating the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*)’ or the ‘immortal embryo (*xiāntāi*)’. As a term, *nèidān* is found in texts dating from at least the second century CE, but until the end of the *Táng* dynasty (618–907) it seems to refer only to meditation and breathing exercises. Some *Táng* and later texts even regard *nèidān* and *wàidān* as different stages or aspects of the same practice.

Although some early writings indicate that during the Six Dynasties period (220–589) adepts used symbolism and technical terms derived from *wàidān*

to describe meditation practices, this did not become common practice until the tenth century onward.¹ In *wàidān*, substances were carefully compounded and refined in a physical laboratory according to specific procedures. In the *nèidān* tradition, this symbolized the laboratory of the human body. The ‘cauldron’ and the ‘furnace’ became the three *dāntián* (fields of elixir or subtle energies) within the human body, where the ‘ingredients’ are refined and heat is generated. The action of ‘pumping the bellows’ came to mean regulating the breath, while heat is generated in a controlled manner in the lower *dāntián*. The substance refined in the cauldron became *jīng-qì-shén* (vital essence, life energy, spirit), the three primary energies within every human being. The ingredients of ‘mercury’ and ‘lead’ became metaphors for *yīn* and *yáng*, which represent the duality that underlies the realm of all created things.

Following a lengthy period during which a popularized *wàidān* had degenerated into a variety of external methods aimed at attaining longevity or immortality, the *nèidān* tradition gathered momentum during the *Táng* dynasty. Early *nèidān* practices incorporated *wàidān* methods, including experimentation with chemical and herbal formulae, rigorous physical disciplines, and various sexual practices. By the time *nèidān* was first codified in the late *Táng* and early *Sòng* (960–1279) dynasties, it had become a complex system of physical, mental and spiritual practices incorporating an array of doctrines and theories derived from *wàidān*, as well as Chinese medicine and cosmology (including *wǔxíng*, the five elements), emblematic trigrams from the *Yijing*, Daoist meditation techniques, and physical exercises (such as *dǎoyīn*).

By the twelfth century, different *nèidān* schools had developed through the synthesis and elaboration of the various doctrinal elements. Specific methods for women – known as *nǚdān* (female alchemy) – had also come into existence.

Practitioners of the mature *nèidān* tradition generally share the view that, before birth, the spirit is undifferentiated from its source, the *Dào*. Upon taking birth, the spirit separates into three energies, each housed in its own *dāntián* (elixir field). These three energies are: *jīng* (vital essence, residing in the lower *dāntián* below the navel), *qì* (subtle life energy, residing in the middle *dāntián* in the heart region), and *shén* (spirit, residing in the upper *dāntián* in the head). These three are described as the *sānbǎo* (three treasures) or *sānqì* (three energies).

From the beginning of a person’s life, external stimuli and human interactions cause these three energies to dissipate progressively, becoming three lesser, ‘conditioned’ energies: instinct (*jīng*), emotion (*qì*), and mentality (*shén*). Eventually, the constant leakage of the precious spiritual essence leads to an almost complete loss of spiritual awareness and physical vitality. In *nèidān* texts, this process of dispersal is referred to as *shùn* (going along, continuation, following the course).

The object of *nèidān* is to reverse or invert (*nì*) this downward and outward dispersal of the three energies, to reinvigorate, nourish, refine and reintegrate ('transmute' or 'transform') each energy into the next higher energy (or 'preceding' energy), to the point where the original unified spiritual energy is restored. This original spirit (*yuánshén*) then returns to its origin in the primordial Emptiness (*xū, kōng*) or Void of the *Dào*. This is accomplished by the combination of a pure and simple lifestyle, mental and emotional balance, physical and breathing exercises, and various forms of meditation. In *nèidān* texts, the process of restoration is referred to as *nì* (inversion) or *diāndǎo* (turning upside down, reversion).

In the *Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir*, master Chén Zhìxū (C14th) summarizes the process of dispersion and restoration of pure spirit:

Vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*) affect one another. When they follow the course (*shùn*), they form a human being; when they invert the course (*nì*), they generate the elixir (*dān*, innate spiritual awareness).

What is the meaning of 'following the course'? (As the *Dàodé jīng* says:) "The One generates the two, the two generate the three, and the three generate the ten thousand things."² Therefore, emptiness (*xū*) transmutes itself into spirit (*shén*), spirit transmutes itself into energy (*qì*), energy transmutes itself into vital essence (*jīng*), vital essence transmutes itself into form (*xíng*), and form becomes a human being.

What is the meaning of 'inverting the course'? The ten thousand things hold the three, the three return to the two, the two return to the One. Those who know this *Dào* look after their spirit and guard their corporeal form (*xíng*). They nourish the corporeal form to refine the vital essence (*jīng*), accumulate the vital essence to transmute it into life energy (*qì*), refine the life energy to merge it with spirit (*shén*), and refine the spirit to revert to emptiness (*xū*). Then the gold elixir (*jīndān*) is achieved.

Chén Zhìxū, Jīndān dàoyào, DZ1067 4, JY209; cf. FIAW pp.15–16

This commonest formulation of *nèidān* practice is found in the *Zhōng-Lǚ* textual tradition,³ in which a preliminary stage is followed by a longer component divided into three stages. These four stages are:

1. *Zhùjī*. Laying the foundation.
2. *Liànjīng huàqì*. Refining *jīng* (vital essence) and transmuting it into *qì* (life energy).
3. *Liànqì huàshén*. Refining *qì* (life energy) and transmuting it into *shén* (spirit).
4. *Liànshén huánxū*. Refining *shén* (spirit) and returning to *xū* (emptiness).

The culmination of the entire *nèidān* process is called ‘reversion (*huán*) to emptiness (*xū*, *i.e.* the *Dào*)’. *Nèidān* masters teach a process of inner reversion and transformation which – if followed correctly with sincerity and determination – has a natural and spontaneous result. Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) says that both stilling the body and stilling and emptying the mind require determination and a strong will:

Keeping vital essence (*jīng*) full can preserve the body. To keep vital essence (*jīng*) full, you must first still the body. When the body is still, there is no desire (*yù*, *i.e.* lust), so vital essence (*jīng*) is full.

Keeping life energy (*qì*) full can nurture the mind. To keep energy (*qì*) full, you must first clear and still the mind. When the mind is clear and still, there is no thought, so life energy (*qì*) is full.

Keeping spirit (*shén*) full you can return to the Void (*xū*). To keep spirit (*shén*) full, you must first have sincere intention (*yì*). With sincere intention, body and mind (*shēnxīn*) merge (*i.e.* inner oneness is attained), and you return to the Void (*xū*).

Therefore, vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*) are the three fundamental medicines. Body, mind, and intention are the three fundamental essentials.

Learning the method of spiritual immortality does not require much. Simply refine the three treasures (*sānbǎo*) of vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*) in order to generate the elixir (*dāntóu*). When the three treasures (*sānbǎo*) are merged in the central palace, the gold elixir (*jīndān*) is accomplished. Is this not easy to practise? Those who find it difficult to practise and to learn are confused and deceived by false delusions.

Lǐ Dàochún, *Zhōnghé jí*, DZ249, JY226

See also: **dān** (8.1), **jīng-qì-shén** (►1).

1. For the historical details, see Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, “Inner Alchemy,” in *DHK* pp.464–65.
2. *Dàodé jīng* 42.
3. *I.e.* *nèidān* texts ascribed to or containing the teachings of Zhōnglí Quán (c.C2nd) and Lǚ Dōngbīn (b.796 CE).

nèiguān (C) *Lit.* to observe (*guān*) within (*nèi*); to contemplate within; inner contemplation, inner vision; refers to active, conscious introspection in order to view the inner landscape and see the interior state of one’s body and mind; a major Daoist meditation practice.

According to the *Nèiguān jīng* (‘Scripture on Inner Contemplation’):

The sages, with compassionate consideration, established the doctrine to teach people to reform. They instructed (people) how to use inner contemplation (*nèiguān*) of the self and body in order to purify the mind.

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 3a; cf. TMLT p.210

Originally, *nèiguān* referred to inner visualization of the human body as an integral part of the cosmos, of the microcosm as a part of the macrocosm. The practice made use of the imagination to visualize lights, colours, entities, gods or heavenly beings within the interior of the body. In this form, the practitioner used receptive awareness to become conscious of his inner self, observing with detachment the arising and cessation of images, thoughts, feelings, and sensations of body and mind. These insights fostered a non-judgmental attitude, culminating in the recovery of the transcendent perception of the universal self.

During and after the *Táng* dynasty (618–907), Buddhism's influence on Daoism is reflected in an evolution in *nèiguān*, as described in Daoist texts. Some of the Buddhist meditation *vipassanā* (Pa. insight) practices taught during this period were relatively straightforward, involving inner contemplation whilst emptying and stilling the mind. With these techniques, the practitioner refines awareness by detaching the mind from its various aspects, such as thinking, emotions, and physical sensations. All of these are understood to disempower the spirit. Other practices were more complex, involving visualizations (*nèishì*) of internal phenomena, powers, gods, subtle energies, and so on.

While incorporating the contemplative and silent aspects of Buddhist insight meditation, Daoist *nèiguān* continued to emphasize the presence of deities within the body and the significance of subtle physical energies. A focus on these was understood to lead gradually to an appreciation of subtler forces and eventually to the 'contemplation of emptiness (*kōngguān*)', which culminates in the joining of an individual's conscious vision with the *Dào*.

In time, *nèiguān* became an important part of the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, whereby the mind is tamed, stilled and brought back to rest in its centre rather than being lured out by sense objects. Through this practice, the consciousness is raised to a point where there may be a direct experience of the transcendent reality of the *Dào*.

Daoists understand the body to be the 'container' of both *Dào* and the cosmos, and therefore look within to realize the *Dào*, and achieve a universal spiritual perspective:

To realize the *Dào* within, one has to understand oneself fully as part of it. One finds the *Dào* by looking inside, by visualizing the body as a replica of the universe. By identifying with the *Dào* that governs and inhabits the body, one loosens attachments to the physical self and

begins to develop a new and wider identity as part of the universe at large. One comes to see oneself truly as a being of spirit that is merely housed in this fragile physical framework that will be subject to all the transformations that the spirit transcends.

Livia Kohn, Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques, TMLT p.197

See also: **meditation (Daoism)**.

nèizhào (C) *Lit.* to illumine (*zhào*) within (*nèi*); to shine within, to illuminate within, to reflect within; to look within; inner vision, inner illumination; often used synonymously with *nèiguān* (inner contemplation); also found in the expressions ‘reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*)’ and ‘reverse the attention (*fǎnguān*) and look within (*nèizhào*)’, which both refer to inner contemplation.

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) quotes his predecessors who say that the method used by the immortals “to focus the spirit at the opening of energy (*qìxuē*)” is to reverse the light or attention (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*). This “opening of energy”, also called the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*) and by numerous other names, refers to the inner ‘location’ where the material and the spiritual meet. It is from here that the lower creation is manifested. It is also the natural inner focus for contemplation. So the way “to breathe the universal harmony in and out (*hūxī tàihé*)”, to experience the inbreathing and outbreathing of the creative process, or to focus at the inner “opening”, is simply to reverse the direction of the attention:

Yuán Tàixū (probably a Daoist adept) says, “The way to focus the spirit (*shén*) at the opening of energy (*qìxuē*) is simply to withdraw the attention from seeing and hearing, and to reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*). That’s all there is to it.” ...

Yú Yùwú (C14th) says, “The immortals’ (*shénxiān*) method of refining and cultivating is to reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*), to breathe the universal harmony in and out (*hūxī tàihé*). This is the method by which you can return to your original Source and recover the original state you knew at the very beginning when you first took bodily birth.”

To reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*) is not about deliberately and obsessively trying to find a particular location of the original spirit (*yín’è*). It is to turn the attention towards it and to contemplate (*guān*) and look (*zhào*). It is simply remaining empty and still (*xūjìng*), so that the spirit may turn inward.

In most cases, the mind of worldly people runs out wildly all day long. Yet all its many skills and clever improvisations are only

reflections or shadows of the light of the spirit. And you can readily see that if the attention of the spirit is always directed one way towards externals, then your own body and inner self will remain unattended.

Right now, there is no need to seek here, there, and everywhere. Simply collect the spirit that is looking (*zhào*) outside. Let go of all your external skills and clever improvisations, and single-mindedly control, collect, and turn it within, clearing away the debris of a multitude of thoughts and worries. This is to reverse the light (*fǎnguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*). In reality, when contemplating (*guān*), there is nothing to contemplate (*guān*); when looking (*zhào*), there is nothing to look at (*zhào*). But this is not to say that you are not to contemplate (*guān*) or look (*zhào*).

Throughout the entire human body, there is only this one primordial Energy (*yī yuánqì*), without such differences as exist between the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. But in ordinary human beings, this energy is enslaved by worldly attachments (*lit.* earthly roots). It wanders about, and is scattered and consumed externally. So there is no other method for attaining the elixir (*dān*) than to withdraw and collect this energy at a place of deep profundity by reversing the light (*huíguāng*) and turning within (*fǎnzhào*).

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Liú Yīmíng says that the mind only exists by virtue of the things it entertains; otherwise it rests in a naturally “clear and empty” state, like the “Great Void (*tàixū*)” of which it is a part. It is the presence of things in the mind that makes the mind appear to live or die. In fact, it is only the body that lives or dies. The way things get into the mind, he says, is through the eyes. Therefore, “if a person can reverse the attention (*fǎnguān*) and look within (*nèizhào*)”, then it is possible to escape the process of living and dying:

The mind (*xīn*) lives through things; the mind dies through things. It functions through the eyes; the mind is like the master (of a house), and the eyes are like the door. The original true mind (*běnlái zhēnxīn*) is clear and empty (*kōngkōng dòngdòng*). There is no self, no things, nothing other. It is one with the Great Void (*tàixū*). How can it live or die? What lives or dies is the body associated with the mind. The mind is not manifest, but manifests through things. When things are perceived, there is mind. When there are no things, there is no mind. The living or dying of the master (of the house) is through things. Things can make the mind live (be manifest), and things can make it die (not be manifest). What enables things to make the mind live or die is opening the door of the eyes, to give in to the thieves, and permit them entry – because perception by the eyes is how things get into the

mind. This is how the life and death of the mind goes on – essentially, it lies with the eyes. If a person can reverse the attention (*fǎnguān*) and look within (*nèizhào*), then there is no way for external things to get in, so how can life and death arise?

Liú Yīmíng, Yīnfú jīng zhù, ZW255, DSI

See also: **nèiguān, zhào** (8.2).

ñemboé kaagüy (AC) *Lit.* prayer (*ñemboé*) of the forest (*kaagüy*); an Avá-Chiripá ceremony. According to Miguel Bartolomé, the *ñemboé kaagüy* is the most important ceremony of the Avá-Chiripá group of the South American Guaraní.¹

Briefly, the *ñemboé kaagüy* consists of nine days of prayer or chanting. For eight nights, only sacred chants are intoned. On the ninth day, the shaman who leads the ceremony chants words which indicate that the deity who has been present has departed. This signals the beginning of the festival part of the *ñemboé kaagüy*, which involves the singing of festive chants and the ritual drinking of *chicha*, a drink of fermented maize, with sugarcane or honey.

This ceremony takes place in the house of dances, a larger than ordinary house which is completely open on the east side. In front of the open space is a large trough for holding the *chicha*. In front of this trough are three cedar posts. The two outer posts hold candles. The centre post is a *kuruzú* (cross), beside which are a branch and a small arrow. The arrow is a symbol of the story of how *Kurahy* and *Yacy* (twin sons of the creator, *Ñanderú*) ascended to heaven on a ladder of arrows.

The ritual takes place in front of the trough and the posts. The men form a line with the shaman and his helpers in the centre; each man has a ritual *mbaraká* (rattle). The women, with their rhythm sticks (*takuapú*), form a line behind the men. Chanting, led by the shamans, is done mostly during the night, and lasts until dawn.

During the *ñemboé kaagüy*, the Avá-Chiripá do not eat meat and fat, and do not have sexual relations. They remain quiet, so that the only sounds are the singers and the instruments, the *mbaraká* and *takuapú*. Taken in the context of their belief that spiritual life is aided by vegetarianism, that prayer (chants) is the most important thing in life, and that the *mbaraká* is an aid to reaching the spiritual world, this ritual is clearly focused on the sacred.

The symbolism associated with the *ñemboé kaagüy* suggests a mystical meaning. That the house of dances is completely open on the east side draws meaning from the Guaraní's own belief in an eastern paradise (*ywy mará ey*) and in the great sound that comes from the east (*yhiapú guasuva*). Also, *Kurahy*, the prototypical shaman, is identified with the sun, which rises in the east. In other religions, the east is also identified with the Divine. In the Bible, for example, God locates paradise "eastward in Eden".²

There are also some parallels with the individual shaman's dream chanting (*paí*), which suggest that the chanters are enacting a ritual that symbolizes mystical communion with divinity: the chanting takes place at night, the time when the Avá-Chiripá shamans commune in their 'dreams' with deities and great shamans of the past; purifying rituals and procedures are followed; the *mbaraká*, symbol of contact with the world of spirits, is used; and a divine being is believed to be present during the first eight days of the ceremony.

Some of his sources told Miguel Bartolomé that the *ñemboé kaagüy* used to be held only once a year, to bless the first harvest of maize; later the number of such ceremonies grew – in 1968 there were six. They are held to cure illness and vanquish evil spirits, as well as to bless the maize harvest, the dates being set by a dream of the highest-ranking shaman responsible for leading the *ñemboé kaagüy*. The *ñemboé kaagüy* is, in fact, the only activity capable of assembling all the Chiripá in pursuit of a common objective. It is the time when they can use their sacred names, and social interaction turns on notions of religious reverence and extreme formality.

1. Miguel Bartolomé, "Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá," SAC pp.136–39.
2. *Genesis* 2:8, 3:24.

nembutsu (J), **niànfó** (C) *Lit.* contemplation (*niàn*) on the Buddha (*fó*); recitation or remembrance (*niàn*) of the name of the Buddha, specifically, the celestial *buddha* Amitābha (S. 'Buddha of Infinite Light'; J. Amida, C. Ēmítuófó), also known as Buddha Amitāyus (S. 'Buddha of Boundless Life'); either contemplation on an image (external or visualized) of Amitābha or the recitation of the *mantra* 'Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light (J. *Namu Amida Butsu*, C. *Nāmó Ēmítuófó*)'; hence, invoking the name of Amitābha either orally or mentally; mindfulness of the Buddha Amitābha. The Japanese *nembutsu* is a contraction of *Namu Amida Butsu*.

The original Sanskrit form of the *mantra* is *Namo Amitābhāya*, from which the Chinese, Japanese, and other language variants have originated. The *mantra* is repeated constantly, the mind dwelling intently upon each clearly articulated word, with proper recitation requiring considerable concentration and effort. The repetition may be performed alone or in groups, and with or without any form of visualization.

Practice of the *nembutsu* is the foundation of the *Mahāyāna* Pure Land traditions of China, Japan, Korea and other East Asian countries, and is based upon a large number of early *Mahāyāna sūtras* that centre around the Buddha Amitābha and his western pure land (S. *sukhāvatī*, 'blissful'). Pure Land Buddhism is a broad-based branch of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, especially popular in East Asia, which has given rise to a number of sects, especially in Japan. *Mahāyāna* Buddhism includes numerous celestial *buddhas*,

bodhisattvas, and other deities. The mythology associated with the celestial *buddhas* links four of them to the cardinal points of the compass. West is the direction assigned to Amitābha, the celestial *buddha* who is the focus of the Pure Land tradition, and his pure land is referred to accordingly.

Although it is not included among these three, a first-century (BCE) text, the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra* ('Sutra of the *Samādhi* of being in the Presence of All *Buddhas*') offers some typical advice concerning remembrance of the Buddha Amitābha. This *sūtra* is thought to be the earliest text mentioning Amitābha and his pure land, and is regarded as the source of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism:

If there are any monks or nuns, laymen or laywomen who keep the precepts in their entirety, they should settle down somewhere all alone and call to mind the presence of the Buddha Amitābha (C. Āmítuó fó) (*i.e.* the *nembutsu*) in the western quarter; then, in accordance with what they have learned, they should reflect that a thousand million myriad *buddha*-fields (heavenly realms) away from here, in his land called *sukhāvatī*, in the midst of a host of *bodhisattvas*, he is preaching the *sūtras*. Let them all constantly call to mind the Buddha Amitābha. . . .

They should not break the precepts, and should call him to mind single-mindedly, either for one day and one night, or for seven days and seven nights. After seven days they will see the Buddha Amitābha. If they do not see him in the waking state, then they will see him in a dream.

Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra 2, T13 418:905a6–17; cf. *PSSL* pp.17–18

In the Chinese tradition, the *nembutsu* is understood as contemplation on and visualization of an image (external or imagined) of Amitābha, which may or may not be accompanied by the recitation of his name. The intention is to concentrate and purify the mind, thereby creating an association with Amitābha and his pure land, and making it fit for rebirth there after death. As the inner concentration deepens, the practitioner may dispense with the visualization of an image and instead contemplate on and absorb Amitābha's boundless spiritual power and attributes. By this means, it is said that he will ultimately experience the "cosmic body" or *dharmakāya* (body of Truth, body of Reality) of the *buddha*.¹

Contemplation on the image of Amitābha was once practised by Chinese monks of the *Tiāntái* (J. *Tendai*) school of *Chán* Buddhism in a kind of walking meditation (C. *jīngxíng*, J. *kinhin*), circumambulating an idol or image of Amitābha for ninety days at a time, chanting his name while mentally visualizing the image. As a result of this intense focus over such a long period, some of the monks would have visions of Amitābha. Later Chinese masters of the Pure Land school, such as the twelfth Pure Land patriarch Jìxíng

Chèwù (1741–1810), taught that the name itself contained all the attributes of Buddha Amitābha, and that its contemplation could replace the use of an external image.²

The Japanese Pure Land tradition focuses more on the recitation of the *nembutsu* than on internal contemplation and visualization. The belief is drawn from the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*, according to which, Amitābha made forty-five vows, committing himself to the salvation of all sentient beings. Among these, he vows to grant rebirth in *sukhāvati* to those who invoke his name “even ten times”. He also undertakes to appear at the moment of their death, accompanied by his two attendant *bodhisattvas*, Avalokiteshvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, together with an assembly of disciples and other *bodhisattvas*, in order to guide them to *sukhāvati* where they will be afforded easy entry into *nirvāṇa*. The “ten directions” mentioned are the eight points of the compass, plus up and down:

If, when I attain buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions – who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and think of me even ten times (*nǎizhì shíniàn*) – should not be born there, may I not attain perfect enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five grave offences (killing one’s father, mother, or an *arhat*; creating disharmony in the *saṃgha*; causing a *buddha* to bleed) and abusing the right *Dharma*.

If, when I attain buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who awaken aspiration for enlightenment do various meritorious deeds and sincerely desire to be born in my land, should not, at their death, see me appear before them surrounded by a multitude of sages, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra 6:18–19, T12 360:268a–b, TPSN p.14

In the Chinese, the traditional Pure Land understanding of *nǎizhì shíniàn* is “Recite (*niàn*) my name even (*nǎizhì*) ten (*shí*) times,” which is the literal translation. “Think of me ten times,” however, is closer to the original Sanskrit *antasho dashabhish chittotpāda-parivartaiḥ*, which means ‘even with ten arisings of thought’, i.e. ‘even with ten concentrated thoughts’. Focused thought is implied, not mere repetition of the *buddha*’s name.³

One of the first to popularize the *nembutsu* technique in Japan was the monk Kūya Shōnin (903–972), founder of the *Kūya* branch of the *Tendai* (C. *Tiāntái*) school of Buddhism. Kūya Shōnin was an itinerant teacher (*hijiri*) who urged the common people to place faith in Amida Buddha through constant recitation of the *nembutsu*. By this means the practitioner hoped to be reborn in *sukhāvati*, where the sufferings of rebirth could be avoided and enlightenment eventually attained. Kūya taught that this simple practice could be performed by all, regardless of their intellectual capacity or depth

of knowledge concerning Buddhist doctrine. He was among the first in a category of itinerant Buddhist preachers who became known as *nembutsu hijiris* or Amida *hijiris*. In Kyōto, Kūya became known as Ichi-Hijiri (saint of the market place). His simple teachings and practice became popular among ordinary people because they did not involve the rigid discipline, austerities and learning associated with the monks and monastic life. Liberation from *samsāra* (transmigration) and a blissful place in the hereafter were assured simply by recitation of the *mantra*.

The switch from visualization of the form of Amitābha to the invocation of his name was further propounded by the Japanese *nembutsu* monk Hōnen (1133–1212), founder of the *Jōdo Shū* branch of Pure Land Buddhism. Formerly a *Tendai* monk, Hōnen became disillusioned after thirty years of practice had failed to assure him that he would attain liberation. His change of direction came about when he read a passage in Shāndǎo's *Commentary on the Meditation Sūtra* (also called the *Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra*). Shāndǎo (613–681) describes a sequence of meditative visualizations upon Amitābha, *sukhāvatī*, and the *bodhisattvas* surrounding him. These progressively advanced practices correspond to various levels of attainment within *sukhāvatī*. According to this text, even the greatest sinners will be reborn in *sukhāvatī* if they call upon the name of Amitābha.

Hōnen is said to have repeated the *nembutsu* 60,000 to 70,000 times a day, advocating it as a powerful means of mental purification, rebirth in *sukhāvatī*, and the eventual attainment of buddhahood. He taught that in an age in which people were morally and spiritually weak and the Buddha's teachings were in decline, it was no longer possible to attain buddhahood by one's own power and effort. Instead, devotees needed to rely upon the power of Amitābha. Hōnen selected three of the many *Mahāyāna sūtras* as primary Pure Land *sūtras*.

A selection of Hōnen's answers to questions have been preserved, though not in his own words, in a biography by the monk Shunjō (C13th–14th):

- Q. Is it possible for a man to enter the pure land simply by concentration of mind and the repetition of the *nembutsu*, and doing nothing else, even though his heart undergoes no change?
- A. It is the rule with common men for their hearts to be in a state of confusion, and it cannot be helped. The only thing is that if men do concentrate their minds upon Amida (Amitābha) and call upon his name, their sin will be destroyed and they will attain rebirth in the pure land. Even sins more grievous than that of mental confusion disappear, if men practise the *nembutsu*.
- Q. Even if we do not fix the number of times for repeating the *nembutsu* as our daily task, is it not all right to do it as often as one can?
- A. It is better to fix the number, lest you yield to laziness....

- Q. How many repetitions of the sacred name should one regard as a day's work?
- A. Well, the number of *nembutsu* repetitions may begin with 10,000, and then go on to 20, 30, 50, 60, or even 100,000. Everyone should in his own heart and according to his own will, determine the number within these limits. . . .
- Q. Though one may wish to be eternally free from the experience of birth and death, and never to be born again into this threefold world, is it true as some say, that, even after one has been reborn in the land of perfect bliss (*i.e. sukhāvatī*), the *karma* which has brought one there (ultimately) loses its efficacy, so that one may be reborn again here into the threefold world? Now I have no wish to be so reborn, even though I might be born a king, or born into the so-called heavenly world above. My one wish is to get entirely free from this world, and never return here, and so to this end what should I do?
- A. Such ideas are entirely wrong. If one is once born into the land of bliss, one will never return to this world, but every such one will attain buddhahood. Only in case one wishes to come back to save others, he may indeed do so, but by so doing, he (is not in fact within the cycle) of birth and death. There is nothing better than the practice of the *nembutsu* to get safely out of this threefold world and be born into the land of perfect bliss. So you ought to practise it most diligently. . . .
- Q. When evil thoughts will keep arising within the mind, what ought one do?
- A. The only thing to do is to repeat the *nembutsu*.

Hōnen the Buddhist Saint, JDH1 pp.129–31; cf. HBSL pp.422–27

Reliance on the *nembutsu* was sometimes taken to extremes. Some maintained that the spiritual power of Amitābha was such that even the worst of sinners, who repeated his name only once, would be reborn in *sukhāvatī* after death. A few of Hōnen's disciples even believed that they could disregard the normal rules of morality and still be liberated simply by placing their faith in Amitābha and by invocation of his name. However, events did not work out as they might have hoped. In 1207, two of them were found to have spent the night in the ladies' chambers of the retired emperor's palace. The emperor was so infuriated that he had four of Hōnen's followers executed, while Hōnen and many of his disciples were defrocked and were forced to revert to lay status.

After Hōnen's death, disagreements among his followers led to the formation of various breakaway movements, the differences being centred largely upon whether or not the *nembutsu* should be combined with other practices,

and the frequency of the repetition required to attain rebirth in *sukhāvatī* and enjoy subsequent liberation and *nirvāṇa*. Understandably, those who taught that the practice of the *nembutsu* was compatible with other practices formed better relationships with the other Buddhist schools, especially the parent *Tendai* school, and they generally fared better and gained a higher degree of acceptance than those who adhered strictly to repetition of the *nembutsu* alone.

Foremost among the latter was the *Jōdo Shinshū* (True Pure Land School), whose followers believed that a single invocation of the name of Amitābha with faith is sufficient, since Amitābha has all the power required to effect the liberation of his followers. Both of the two breakaway branches of the *Jōdo Shū* (the *Chinzei-ha* and *Seizan-ha*), who co-operated with the parent *Tendai* school in recommending practices other than the *nembutsu*, believed that entrance to *sukhāvatī* was not assured until the time of death. In preparation for that event, they advocated more or less constant repetition of the *nembutsu*, as many as 84,000 times a day.⁴ *Jōdo Shū* and *Jōdo Shinshū* remain the two dominant representatives of the modern-day Japanese Pure Land tradition. *Jōdo Shinshū* is also known as *Shin Buddhism*.

There were other Pure Land variants on the same theme. The Pure Land teacher Yūgyō Shōnin (1239–1289), founder of the *Jishū* branch, believed that faith in Amitābha was not required. After his death, his teaching prevailed for around a hundred years before being overshadowed by *Jōdo Shinshū*.

The belief concerning a single repetition of the name of Amitābha is known as *ichinengi*. It argues that out of compassion (*karuṇā*), the Buddha Amitābha will pay heed to and honour any prayer to him for liberation, even a single invocation of his name. Amitābha will exert his own power, and will do everything; all that is required is the ‘other power (*tariki*)’ of Amitābha. Personal effort (*jiriki*, self-power) as the means of assuring rebirth in *sukhāvatī* is regarded as egocentric, as well as unrealistic. The multiple-recitation doctrine (*tanengi*) adopted by the Chinese Pure Land school maintains that the devotee’s effort (*jiriki*) is also required, together with the blessings of Amitābha.

There are two types of *nembutsu* practice: mental (J. *kannen-nembutsu*) and vocal (J. *kushō-nembutsu*, *shōmyō-nembutsu*). The latter is easier, and if a person lacks the internal focus necessary to practise mental recitation, then he can practise vocal recitation. Mental *nembutsu* can be practised in two ways: by reflection on his great wisdom and compassion or by visualization of an image of Amitābha, adorned with his eighty-four thousand marks of perfection, as mentioned in the *Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra*:

Buddha Amitāyus possesses eighty-four thousand physical characteristics, each having eighty-four thousand secondary marks of excellence. Each secondary mark emits eighty-four thousand rays of light; each ray of light shines universally upon the lands of the ten

directions, embracing and not forsaking those who are mindful of the *buddha*. It is impossible to describe in detail these rays of light, physical characteristics and marks, transformed *buddhas*, and so forth. But you can see them clearly with your mind's eye through contemplation.

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 17, T12 365:343b, TPSN p.75

Nembutsu has similarities with the *Theravāda* practice of *buddhānussati* (reflection on the Buddha), in which the virtues and attributes of the Buddha are called to mind as the focus of meditation. In the *Zen* tradition, chanting of the *nembutsu* generally refers to practices akin to *buddhānussati*. *Nembutsu* is also used as a *kōan* (a *Zen* riddle with no logical solution), which is expressed as, “Who is reciting the *nembutsu*?”

See also: **Amitābha** (►1), **buddhānussati**, **hijiri** (7.1), **myōkōnin** (►4), **nembutsu ōjō** (8.1).

1. *Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 15, T12 365:343a, TPSN pp.73, 99 (n.32).*
2. See “Nembutsu,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism, ODB*.
3. See note on *Larger Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtra 6:18, T12 360:268a, TPSN p.97 (n.6).*
4. See “Jōdo Shinshū,” “Jōdo Shū,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism, ODB*.

netī-karma, netī-kriyā (S/H) *Lit.* string (*netī*) practice (*karma, kriyā*); one of the six preliminary cleansing practices of *haṭha yoga*, in which a string or thread is passed through the nasal cavity for cleansing purposes. See **haṭha yoga**.

nibbidānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of disenchantment (*nibbidā*). See **anupassanā**.

nidrā, nīndaḍī (in meditation) (S/H) *Lit.* sleep; one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome by anyone who meditates. See **sleep in meditation**.

night, night time, night watches Many mystics and religious people have said that the best time for prayer, meditation or contemplation is the latter part of the night, before the break of dawn, when the body and mind have been refreshed by sleep and the atmosphere is still peaceful while the world sleeps. Even in modern times, keeping a vigil at night, remaining awake in prayer or meditation is still practised in the monasteries and convents of the various

religions, as well as during certain religious festivals. Many of the practitioners of the various forms of meditation current today also utilize part of the night for their spiritual practice.

Spiritual and religious literature contains numerous references to nightly meditation, often linked with the expression of deep spiritual yearning for union with God. In the words of Isaiah:

At night my soul longs for You
and my spirit in me seeks for You.

Isaiah 26:9, JB

In the *Psalms*, too, the psalmist speaks of “all night” communion with the mystic Name and the divine Law. The exile of which the psalmist speaks is life in this world, exiled from the soul’s true home:

Where I live in exile,
Your statutes are psalms for me.
All night, *Yahweh*, I remember Your Name
and observe Your Law.

Psalms 119:54–55, JB

“Your statutes” probably carries a double meaning, referring to both the mystic teachings as well as to the divine Law or Word, which support a soul in “exile” in this world. In another psalm, the devotee speaks of devotion to the Lord “at daybreak” and “all through the night”:

It is good to give thanks to *Yahweh*,
to play in honour of Your Name, Most High –
To proclaim Your love at daybreak
and Your faithfulness all through the night
to the music of the zither and lyre,
to the rippling of the harp.

Psalms 92:1–3, JB

Here, the references to musical instruments are probably allusions to meditation upon the divine Music, rather than indications of an all-night music session. Another psalm speaks of instruction “in the night”:

I bless *Yahweh*, who is my counsellor,
and in the night my inmost self instructs me;
I keep *Yahweh* before me always,
for with Him at my right hand nothing can shake me.

Psalms 16:7–8, JB

The “inmost self” is the soul that is one with the Word and ultimately with God Himself. Hence, the ‘counsel’ of *Yahweh* and instruction from the “inmost self” come to the same thing – the divine Word.

With the passage of time, a divine yearning and nostalgia takes hold of devotees who sincerely seek Him. It is this that draws them nightly to their meditation, and of which the psalmist is writing when he says:

My souls thirsts for God,
the God of Life;
When shall I go to see
the face of God? . . .

In the daytime, may *Yahweh*
command His love to come;
And by night may His song be on my lips,
a prayer to the God of my life! . . .

Send out Your light and Your Truth,
let these be my guide,
To lead me to Your holy Mountain
and to the place where You live.

Psalms 42:2, 8, 43:3, JB

“By night may His song be on my lips” is probably another allusion to nightly meditation. “Your light and Your Truth” are the Word that is sent out from God, which manifests within as music and light. This is the only true “guide” that can lead a soul to God’s “holy mountain”, eternity. Similarly:

God, You are my God, I am seeking You,
my soul is thirsting for You,
my flesh is longing for You,
a land parched, weary and waterless;
I long to gaze on You in the sanctuary (within),
and to see Your power and glory. . . .

On my bed I think of You,
I meditate on You all night long,
for You have always helped me.
I sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings;
my soul clings close to You;
Your Right Hand supports me.

Psalms 63:1–2, 6–8, JB

The psalm is an expression of the soul's yearning and the joy of contact with His presence and with His 'Name'. "On my bed I think of You" carries a double meaning. It refers to nightly meditation, but also to the single eye, the point in the body at which the soul withdraws from the world, falling asleep so far as the world is concerned. God is with those who take shelter with Him, whose souls cling to Him.

Echoing these words, in the mystic allegory of the *Song of Songs*, the lover, symbolic of the soul, similarly speaks of her love for the divine beloved, experienced in nightly meditation:

On my bed, at night, I sought him
whom my soul loves.
I sought but did not find him.

Song of Songs 3:1, JB

These mystic sentiments are universal and are not associated with any particular religion or culture. Mystical verses portraying such longing are to be found in many languages, expressing the soul's individual relationship with God. Many speak of night as the time of solitude, prayer, and deep longing for the Divine.

Nightly vigils are also significant in the Christian tradition generally, but especially in the monastic traditions of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov of the Orthodox Church suggests:

Night time is particularly helpful for the practice of the prayer of Jesus on account of the darkness and silence.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 2, OPI p.12

The ideal is to spend the entire night in prayer, as John Klimakos advises:

You should spend most of the night in prayer and only what is left of it in psalmody; and during the day prepare yourself as best as you can.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 27, LDAC p.272

But this cannot be accomplished all at once. Gregory of Sinai advises three ways, according to a traditional tripartite division of seekers into beginners, progressives, and adepts ("the perfect"):

Hear, if you will, how it is best to spend the night. For the night vigil, there are three programmes: for beginners, for those midway on the path, and for the perfect. The first programme is as follows: to sleep half the night and to keep vigil for the other half, either from evening till midnight, or from midnight till dawn. The second is to keep vigil

after nightfall for one or two hours, then to sleep for four hours, then to rise for matins and to chant psalms and pray for six hours until day-break, then to chant the first hour, and after that to sit down and practise stillness. . . . Then one can either follow the programme of spiritual work given for the daylight hours, or else continue in unbroken prayer, which gives a greater inner stability. The third programme is to stand and keep vigil uninterruptedly throughout the night.

Gregory of Sinai, On Commandments 101, Philokalia, PCT4 pp.233–34

Archimandrite Sophrony describes the practice of the Staretz Silouan:

Physically strong, he did not lie down to sleep but spent all his nights in prayer, either standing, or sitting on a backless stool. Only when he was worn out with fatigue did he fall asleep where he sat, for a quarter of an hour or so, and then take up his prayer again. Usually he only slept an hour and a half or two hours in the twenty-four.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.18

See also: **dawn, meditation, sleep in meditation, time for prayer, vigil.**

nimitta (S/Pa) *Lit.* image, appearance, object; sign, mark, token, characteristic, designation; symbol, omen, portent; a word with a wide spread of meaning, depending on the context; in Buddhist meditation, especially in the *Theravāda* analytical *Abhidhamma* and commentarial literature, a mental image formed by concentration upon a meditation subject – a term not used in this context in the earlier Pali *suttas* (discourses); also, as *chatur-nimitta*, the four signs (an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a contemplative) seen by Prince Siddhārtha, the Buddha-to-be, which awakened him to the inherent suffering and transience of human life, and resulted in his renunciation of the world and his quest for spiritual enlightenment.

In the *Theravāda* tradition, the standard course of Buddhist meditation involves concentration on one or more of forty meditation themes and subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). First appearing in the Pali *suttas*, they are elaborated upon in the *Abhidhamma*, in various scholarly commentaries, and by writers such as Buddhaghosa (C5th). The intention is to pass through the three early stages of concentration (*samādhi*), which lead to the eight stages of *jhāna* (meditative absorption). The first four *jhānas* correspond to levels in *rūpaloka* (world of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes), and the second four to levels in *arūpaloka* (formless world). These two worlds would seem to be equivalent to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology.

Progress through these stages is made possible by concentration upon a *nimitta* (mental image) of one of the forty meditation subjects. Among

these are the ten *kaṣiṇas*, which may be taken as an example of the practice. A *kaṣiṇa* is a simple external object, such as a blue disc, which is used as a focus for concentration. In present times, a bowl of flowers, a candle, or an image of the Buddha may also be used. The practitioner's intention is to form a mental image (*nimitta*) of the *kaṣiṇa*, which is then completely internalized and used as a focus for further meditation. For instance, taking a blue circle fixed upon a wall as a *kaṣiṇa*, the practitioner gazes at it, repeating the words 'blue, blue' with concentration, until the things surrounding the disc seem to fade away and the disc itself even appears to be increasingly mental in nature. The perception and mental image at this stage is known as a *parikamma nimitta* (initial or preparatory image), and the associated concentration is called *parikamma samādhi* (preparatory concentration). This is the initial and undeveloped concentration experienced by most practitioners when meditation is first attempted.

With increased concentration, whether or not the eyes are closed, a mental image of the *kaṣiṇa* persists within the mind, which – by dint of practice – can eventually be maintained by focused concentration and mental visualization. This is known as an *uggaha nimitta* – an acquired or learnt image – acquired as a result of sustained concentration, though still weak and unsteady. At this stage, the *nimitta* is an exact likeness, in which even blemishes on the original *kaṣiṇa* are reproduced.

As concentration deepens, the mentally produced or visualized image not only becomes increasingly steady, but also seems to emit light, appearing like a bright star. This kind of clear and luminous image, free from any blemishes, impurities or irrelevant aspects of the original object, is known as a *paṭibhāga nimitta* (representational, semblance, mirror, or counterpart image). The concentration attained is called *upacāra samādhi* (threshold or access concentration), because the practitioner is close to attaining the first *jhāna*. With prolonged practice, a *paṭibhāga nimitta* can readily be brought to mind. By further determined concentration on the *paṭibhāga nimitta*, the practitioner ultimately achieves *appanā samādhi* (attainment or fixed concentration), which is concentration at the level of entry into the first *jhāna*.

A *nimitta* associated with an external *kaṣiṇa* is readily understandable. Such a *nimitta* would first appear in the form of the external object. Less easy to comprehend, perhaps, is a *nimitta* associated with something less tangible or readily observable, such as a part of the body, or breathing, or an entirely mental 'object' of meditation such as the purity and full enlightenment of the Buddha, accompanied by a suitable verbal formula, repeated mentally. Such *nimittas* appear spontaneously before the mental eye when a certain degree of concentration has been attained. During the practice of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing), for example, the *nimitta* that first appears before the mind's eye (with eyes closed) is often said to be somewhat fuzzy, like cotton wool, a puff of smoke, or a film of clouds. For

meditation using a mentally repeated formula concerning the virtues of the Buddha, the *nimitta* might be a vision of a statue or other image of the Buddha. In all cases, as concentration deepens, the quality of the *nimitta* changes from *uggaha* (acquired) to *paṭibhāga* (counterpart). Speaking specifically of using an earth *kaṣiṇa* (meditation object) while repeating the words, “*paṭhavī, paṭhavī* (earth, earth)”, the Burmese Buddhist professor Mehm Tin Mon (b.1934) clearly describes this transition:

One meditates on this acquired image with closed eyes, saying mentally “*paṭhavī, paṭhavī*” as before. When one reaches a higher degree of concentration, the image suddenly changes its colour and appearance. It becomes many times brighter and is as smooth as the surface of a mirror. The change is like taking a mirror out of its rough leather case. This new image is also known as *paṭibhāga nimitta* (counterpart image).

The difference between the two images is very distinct. *Uggaha nimitta* is an exact mental replica of the original object; it contains all the defects present in the original object. *Paṭibhāga nimitta* is free from all defects; it is very bright and smooth. The latter may not possess a definite form or colour. . . .

As soon as the *paṭibhāga nimitta* arises, the concentration (*samādhi*) reaches a state known as *upacāra samādhi*, i.e. neighbourhood (or threshold) concentration. At this stage the five *jhāna* factors (mental states that a meditator works through when passing through the four lower *jhānas*) become distinct and strong; *pīti* (rapture) and *sukha* (bliss) are so predominant that the meditator experiences ecstatic joy and bliss which he has never experienced before.

He now lets the *paṭibhāga nimitta* spread endlessly in all directions by his willpower, and meditates, “*paṭhavī, paṭhavī*” as before. Eventually he gains *jhāna samādhi* or *appanā samādhi* (meditative concentration). At this stage, he can enjoy the calmness, serenity, joy and bliss of the *jhāna* again and again, as much as he wishes. If he practises well, he can remain in absorption or trance for an hour, two hours, a day, two days or up to seven days. During this absorption, there is a complete, though temporary, suspension of fivefold sense activity and of the five hindrances. The state of consciousness is, however, fully alert and lucid.

Mehm Tin Mon, *Buddha Abhidhamma*, BAUS pp.57–58

In a series of *Dhamma* talks on meditation, the Burmese monk Pa Auk Tawya Sayadaw (b.1934) describes the appearance of a *nimitta* associated with a different form of meditation – the practice of *ānāpānasati* – in which the object of meditation is the in- and out-breath. He is explaining a passage from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*:

Breathing in a short breath, he knows, “I am breathing in a short breath;” breathing out a short breath, he knows, “I am breathing out a short breath.”¹

At this stage you have to develop awareness of whether the in- and out-breaths are long or short. . . . You should decide for yourself what length of time you will call long and what length of time you will call short. Be aware of the duration of time of each in- and out- breath. You will be aware that sometimes the breath is long in time and sometimes short. Just knowing this is all you have to do at this stage. You should not note, “In, out, long. In, out, short,” but just note “In, out,” and be aware of whether the breaths are long or short. You should know this by just being aware of the length of time that the breath brushes and touches the upper lip or tip of the nostrils as it enters and leaves the body.

For some meditators at this stage the *nimitta* may appear, but if you can do this calmly for about one hour and no *nimitta* appears then you should move on to the next stage:

“Experiencing the whole (breath-)body, I will breathe in,” thus he trains himself; and, “Experiencing the whole (breath-)body, I will breathe out,” thus he trains himself.²

Here the Buddha is instructing you to be aware of the whole breath continuously from the beginning to the end. You are training your mind to be thus continuously aware of the breath from the beginning to the end. As you are doing this then the *nimitta* may appear. If the *nimitta* appears you should not immediately shift your attention to it, but continue to be aware of the breath.

If you are aware continuously of the breath from the beginning to the end calmly for about one hour and no *nimitta* appears then you should move on to the next stage:

“Calming the breath body I will breathe in,” thus he trains himself; and, “Calming the breath body I will breathe out,” thus he trains himself.

To do this you should decide that you should cause the breath to be calm and continue to be aware continuously of the breath from the beginning to the end. You should not do anything more than that to make the breath become calm because if you do you will find that your concentration will be broken and fall away. . . . So all you need to do at this stage is to decide to calm the breath and to continue to

be continuously aware of the breath. By practising in this way, you will find that the breath becomes calmer and the *nimitta* may appear.

Just before the *nimitta* appears a lot of meditators encounter difficulties; mostly they find that the breath becomes very subtle and is not clear to their mind. If this happens you should keep your awareness at the place where you last noticed the breath and wait for it there.

You should reflect that you are not a person who is not breathing, but you are breathing and your mindfulness is not strong enough to be aware of the breath. A dead person, a baby in the womb, a drowned person, . . . a person in the fourth *jhāna*, a person experiencing *nirodha-samāpatti* (attainment of the cessation of all aspects of mind) and a *brahmā* (deity), only these seven people do not breathe and you are not one of them. So you are breathing, but you are simply not mindful enough to be aware of it.

Do not make effort to change the breath and make it more obvious. If you do that you will not develop in concentration. Just be aware of the breath as it is, and if it is not clear simply wait for it at the place where you last noticed it. You will find that as you apply your mindfulness and understanding in this way that the breath will appear to you again.

The appearance of the *nimitta* produced by developing mindfulness of breathing is not the same for every person, but varies according to the individual.

Pa Auk Tawya Sayadaw, Practice which Leads to Nibbāna, PNPA pp.49–51

Pa Auk Tawya Sayadaw goes on to list the various forms that can be taken by a *nimitta* associated with *ānāpānasati*. Cotton wool, teased-out cotton and moving air are some of the forms taken by a *uggaha nimitta*. A bright ruby, pearl or gem are forms unique to a *paṭibhāga nimitta*. Other forms are common to both kinds of *nimitta*; these include a bright light like the morning star (Venus), the stem of a cotton plant, a long rope or string, a puff of smoke, a film of cloud, a lotus flower, a chariot wheel, and the disc of the sun or moon.³

He then explains that the differences are due to the particular nature of the minds of individual practitioners. The intention is to move the attention from the breathing to the *nimitta*, but this has to be done naturally and in such a manner that concentration is not interrupted and the *nimitta* is lost. Concentration on the *paṭibhāga nimitta* will lead to *appanā samādhi*, and entry into the first *jhāna*:

In most cases a pure white *nimitta* like cotton wool is the *uggaha nimitta* because the *uggaha nimitta* is usually not clear and bright. When the *nimitta* becomes bright like the morning star, sparkling and clear this is the *paṭibhāga nimitta*. When the *nimitta* is like a ruby or

gem and is not bright, it is the *uggaha nimitta*; and when it is bright and sparkling it is the *paṭibhāga nimitta*. The rest of the shapes and colours should be understood in the same way.

The *nimitta* appears to different people in different ways because it is produced by perception. The difference in perception of different meditators before the *nimitta* arises produces different types of *nimittas*. Even though mindfulness of breathing is only one meditation subject it can produce various types of *nimittas* depending on the individual.

When you have reached this stage it is important not to play with your *nimitta*. Do not let it go away from you and do not intentionally change its shape or appearance. If you do this your concentration will not develop any further, and your progress will stop. Your *nimitta* will probably disappear. So at this point when your *nimitta* first appears, do not change your concentration from your breath to the *nimitta*. If you do you will find it disappears.

If you find that the *nimitta* is stable and your mind on its own becomes fixed on it, then just leave your mind there. If you force your mind to come away from it you will probably lose your concentration.

If your *nimitta* appears far away in front of you do not pay attention to it as it will probably disappear. If you do not pay attention to it and simply continue to concentrate on the breath at the place where the breath touches, you will find that the *nimitta* will come and stay at that place.

If your *nimitta* comes and appears at the place where the breath touches, and the *nimitta* remains stable and appears as if it is the breath and the breath appears as if it is the *nimitta*, then you can forget about the breath and just be aware of the *nimitta*. In this way by changing your attention from the breath to the *nimitta*, you will be able to make further progress. As you keep your mind on the *nimitta* you will find that it becomes whiter and whiter, and when it is white like cotton wool then this is the learning sign (*uggaha nimitta*).

You should determine to keep your mind calmly concentrated on that white learning sign for one hour, two hours, three hours, *etc.* If you are able to keep your mind fixed on the *uggaha nimitta* for one or two hours you should find that it becomes clear, bright, and brilliant. This is then called the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). At this point you should determine and practise to keep your mind fixed on the *paṭibhāga nimitta* for one hour, two hours, or three hours. Practise until you are successful at this.

At this stage you will reach either *upacāra* or *appanā* concentration. *Upacāra* concentration is the concentration close to and preceding *jhāna*. *Appanā* concentration is the concentration of (the first) *jhāna*. Both these types of concentration have the *paṭibhāga nimitta* as their

object. The difference between them is that, in *upacāra* concentration, the *jhāna* factors are not completely developed to full strength.

Pa Auk Tawya Sayadaw, Practice which Leads to Nibbāna, PNPA pp.52–53

Although the term *nimitta* is not used in the Pali *suttas* to refer to a mental image, a comparable term *rūpa* (form, image) does appear in the *suttas* in a commonly repeated list of eight stages of mastery (*abhibhāyatana*) attained by means of *kaṣiṇa* exercises.⁴ *Rūpa* is understood in the commentaries to refer to what became known as a *nimitta*.⁵

More significantly, the *Upakkilesa Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* emphasizes the importance of perceiving a shining light (*obhāsa*) and the appearance of *rūpas*. Here, *rūpas* are forms or images seen in visions during meditation. According to the *sutta*, after enquiring about their physical welfare, the Buddha asks his disciple Anuruddha and his two companions what they are experiencing in their meditation, and whether they are happy with their progress. Anuruddha replies that they see both light (*obhāsa*) and the vision of forms (*dassanaṃ rūpānaṃ*) within, but that these experiences do not persist. The Buddha therefore advises that they should seek the reason for it within themselves. Then, drawing on his own experience, he identifies several *upakkilesas* (impurities and obstructions) that can lead to a break in focus and the consequent loss of inner vision. In particular, he mentions doubt, inattention, sloth and torpor, fear, elation, depression, too much or too little energy, desire, perception of diversity, and a flood of *rūpas*.⁶

“Anuruddha, have you attained any superhuman states, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a comfortable abiding?”

“Venerable sir, as we abide here diligent, ardent and resolute, we perceive both light (*obhāsa*) and a vision of forms (*dassanaṃ rūpānaṃ*). Soon afterwards the light and the vision of forms disappear, but we have not discovered the cause of that.”

“You should discover the cause for that, Anuruddha. Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened *bodhisatta*, I too perceived both light and a vision of forms. Soon afterwards the light and the vision of forms disappeared, and I thought: ‘What is the cause and condition why the light and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then I considered thus: ‘Doubt arose in me, and because of the doubt my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. I shall so act that doubt will not arise in me again.’”

Majjhima Nikāya 128, Upakkilesa Sutta, PTSM3 pp.157–58; cf. MDBB p.1012

The same verbal formula is then used for the other *upakkilesas* as a possible cause for the loss of the visions, some of which are further elucidated by

examples. Fear is explained by: “Suppose a man set out on a journey and murderers leaped out on both sides of him; then fear would arise in him because of that. So too, fear arose in me ... *etc.*” Elation is illustrated by: “Suppose a man seeking one entrance to a hidden treasure came all at once upon five entrances to a hidden treasure, then elation would arise in him because of that.” Excess and lack of energy are clarified by the examples: “Suppose a man were to grip a quail tightly with both hands; it would die then and there,” and “Suppose a man were to grip a quail loosely; it would fly out of his hands.” And “perception of diversity” and the flood of forms are interpreted in the *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* (commentary) as giving attention to the many forms in both the heavenly and human worlds, which results in the experience of many visions.⁷ The Buddha then describes his progress through the four *jhānas*, upon which he realizes, “My deliverance is unshakeable; this is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being.”

Interestingly, the *Cūlagosinga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* repeats the same story verbatim up to the point where the Buddha asks the three monks about their meditation. At this point, Anuruddha replies that they are having no problems at all. He says that whenever they so desire, they enter the four lower *jhānas*, followed by the four higher states, which lead on to the cessation (*nirodha*) of all *saññā* (mental activity, however fine and subtle), *i.e.* *nibbāna*. The Buddha closes the conversation with the observation, “There is no other comfortable abiding higher or more sublime than that one.”⁸ The difference exemplifies some of the uncertainties regarding the provenance and authenticity of the Pali *suttas*.

See also: **kasiṇa, upacāra samādhi** (8.1).

1. *Majjhima Nikāya* 10, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSM1 p.56, MNNS.
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 10, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSM1 p.56, MNNS.
3. Pa Auk Tawya Sayadaw, *Practice which Leads to Nibbāna*, PNPA pp.51–52.
4. *E.g.* *Dīgha Nikāya* 16 (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), 33 (*Sangīti Sutta*), PTSD2 pp.110–11, PTSD3 p.260; *Majjhima Nikāya* 77 (*Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta*), PTSM2 pp.12–14; *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:29 (*Paṭhamakosala Sutta*), PTSA5 pp.61–62.
5. *E.g.* Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 4:31, PTSV pp.125–26.
6. *Majjhima Nikāya* 128, *Upakkilesa Sutta*, PTSM3 pp.155–62, MDBB pp.1010–15.
7. *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, in MDBB p.1340 (nn.1192–93).
8. *Majjhima Nikāya* 31, *Cūlagosinga Sutta*, PTSM1 pp.207–9, MDBB pp.302–4.

nirodhānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of cessation (*nirodha*).
See **anupassanā**.

nishpanna-krama, sampanna-krama, utpanna-krama (S), rdzogs rim (T) Lit. completion, perfection, consummation, or fulfilment (*nishpanna*, *sampanna*, *utpanna*) stage (*krama*); the completion phase of spiritual transformation by means of meditative practices; the second of the two main categories of ‘skilful means (*upāya*)’ or meditative practices associated with *anuttara-yoga tantra*; also identified with the *anuyoga* (further *yoga*) of the *Nyingma* school. Although the methods and practices described in the various *tantras* may differ to some extent, all are agreed that the goal is supreme enlightenment and buddhahood.

The many spiritual practices described in the *anuttara-yoga tantras* are often understood as belonging either to the initial, generation stage (*utpatti-krama*) or to the fulfilment or completion stage (*nishpanna-krama*). The completion stage of tantric practice is emphasized especially in the group of texts known as the ‘mother *tantras*’, exemplified by the *Hevajra Tantra*. The earlier *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (credited with the introduction of explicit sexual symbolism), however, also describes *nishpanna-krama*, breaking it down into five successive stages (*pañcha-krama*). These five stages are: *vajrajāpa* (repetition or recitation of *mantras*); purification of consciousness (*chitta-vishuddhi*); self-empowerment (*svādhisṭhāna*); enlightenment (*abhisambodhi*); and union or integration (*yuganaddha*), or perfect buddhahood. The *Hevajra Tantra* expands on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, introducing specific sexual *yoga* practices, together with awareness and control of the body’s subtle life energies (*prāṇas*, *nāḍīs*, *chakras*, etc.) as a part of *nishpanna-krama*.

Nishpanna-krama refers to a category of meditative practices in which the practitioner tries to visualize and realize the essential *shūṇyatā* (emptiness, voidness) of all phenomena, material or mental. This is accomplished by manipulation and control of the currents of life energy (*prāṇa* or *vāyu*) that flow through the energy centres (*chakras*) and energy channels (*nāḍīs*) of the subtle body. Part of the intention behind this practice is to develop awareness of the subtle energy body, which is described in *anuttara-yoga tantra* texts as the *māyādeha* or *māyākāya* (illusory body).

The initial visualization and associated practices of the generation stage (*utpatti-krama*) help to spiritualize the mind, loosening attachment to the self and to the world. In the fulfilment stage (*nishpanna-krama*), the initiate goes on to practise the six-faceted yogic meditation of: withdrawal from the senses (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna*), breath control and control of the *prāṇa* (*prāṇāyāma*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), recollection (*anusmṛiti*), and absorption (*samādhi*). The result of these spiritual practices is the experience of *samādhi*. In this state of consciousness, the otherwise endless chattering of the mind comes to an end, and the initiate experiences the true nature of the ‘emptiness (*shūṇyatā*)’ that underlies all things. This vision or awareness of *shūṇyatā* is infused with an inherent knowledge or gnosis that is

simultaneously aware, in the absence of all cogitative processes, of the true nature of both the material and higher realms.

This state of *samādhi* and gnosis is inseparably associated with intense bliss. It is said to evoke 21,600 moments of imperishable bliss, which course through the *chakras* and *nāḍīs*. Repeated experience of this state purifies the mind and body of all hindrances, passions and confusions, resulting in full awareness of the subtle body described in *anuttara-yoga tantra* texts as the *māyādeha* or *māyākāya* (illusory body). Ultimately, all forms and perceptions are dissolved as the meditator merges into the clear light of absolute Reality, which culminates in the attainment of perfect and complete enlightenment. At this stage, the practitioner's body is believed to have been transformed into a divine body, while his consciousness expands into the omniscient consciousness of a *buddha*.

Nishpanna-krama is also said to fall into two phases. The first ('with images') involves visualization of the deity (which is started in the generation stage), together with practice of the various yogic techniques. The second phase ('without images') is when the meditator transcends visualization of the deity and yogic practices, and enters a formless and blissfully aware state of consciousness.

In the *Geluk* school of Tibetan Buddhism, *nishpanna-krama* is generally understood to be comprised of five substages:

1. Isolation of speech, in which mental and physical energy is withdrawn and concentrated in the central channel (*sushumṇā*) of the subtle body.
2. Isolation of mind, in which the energies are withdrawn and concentrated in the heart *chakra*, and the meditator experiences a sequence of visions akin to those experienced at the time of death, culminating in a vision of the clear light, which at this stage is a reflected or lower realization of the emptiness (*shūnyatā*) of all phenomena.
3. The development of the illusory body, in which, building upon the experience of the reflected *shūnyatā*, the practitioner generates – from subtle physical energies – an impure image of the *buddha*-body or form body that will be manifested upon enlightenment. It is this impure image that is known as the 'illusory body'.
4. Experience of the clear light, in which the practitioner directly realizes the voidness or emptiness of all phenomena.
5. Union, in which, having completely purified the illusory body through realization of the clear light, both the illusory body and the clear light merge together to create the form body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*) and *dharma* body (*dharmakāya*) of a fully enlightened *buddha*.¹

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra**, **utpatti-krama**.

1. See Roger Jackson, “Ambiguous Sexuality,” in *BNTW* p.161 (n.32).

'od gsal (T) *Lit.* radiant (*gsal*) light (*'od*); clear light; phonetically rendered as *odsal* or *ösel*. See **prabhāsvara**.

oil, oil of faith, oil of purity Metaphors for the ‘fuel’ of spiritual practice that keeps the ‘lamp’ of the soul alight; prayer, meditation.

The imagery is drawn from Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins who await the arrival of the bridegroom at a wedding. While they wait, five are wise enough to keep oil in their lamps, keeping the wicks trimmed and burning. The other five are foolish, taking no oil with them:

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them;
but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Matthew 25:3–4, KJV

When the bridegroom comes, he takes the five wise ones in with him to the wedding, leaving the five foolish ones trying to find oil at the last minute. But it is too late. When they finally return and knock at the door, they are refused admittance.¹

In this parable, Jesus is referring specifically to meditation on the Word. The virgins are disciples of the saviour, the bridegroom. The lamp is the soul. The oil is meditation on the divine Word, also known as the Holy Oil and Oil of Incorruption. Such meditation lights the inner lamp and makes the soul shine.

Disciples look forward to meeting their beloved within, and to the consummation of the spiritual marriage – union with the Divine. Those who attend to their meditation remain spiritually awake and prepared. Their inner lamps are lit. But those who are negligent are unprepared. In an interesting aside to the story, the foolish ones ask if they can have some of the wise ones’ oil, but are refused by the wise ones on the grounds that they only have sufficient for themselves:

And the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.” But the wise answered, saying, “Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you.”

Matthew 25:8–9, KJV

It means that the fruits of meditation cannot be shared. Spiritual progress is individual; the fruits of meditation are a personal treasure, and cannot be shared with others.

The mystical meaning of this parable is indicated in a number of the early Christian and Manichaean writings. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for instance, Judas Thomas alludes to both the parable of the ten virgins and to the similar parable of the servants, some of whom kept watch over their master's house, while others behaved badly, got drunk, and permitted thieves to break in:²

My lamp with its bright light expects the master
coming from the marriage that it may receive him,
and he may not see it dimmed because the oil is spent.

My eyes, O Christ, look upon you (within),
and my heart leaps with joy:
For I have fulfilled your will
and perfected your commandments,
that I may be likened to that watchful and careful servant
who in his eagerness neglects not to keep vigil.

For I have not slumbered idly in keeping your commandments:
In the first watch, and at midnight, and at cockcrow,
that my eyes may behold you, all night have I laboured,
to keep my house from robbers, lest it be broken into.

Acts of Thomas 146; cf. ANT p.429

The lamp is the soul who awaits the coming of the inner beloved. The lamp is not dimmed because the disciple (the "servant") has kept a vigil, and attended to his nightly meditation. He has remained spiritually awake, labouring all night in meditation, so that his "house" (himself) may not be overcome by the "robbers" of human passions and weaknesses.

Frequent allusions to the parable of the virgins are also found in the Manichaean psalms in Coptic:

Let us also, my brethren, put oil in our lamps
until our Lord passes in.
Let us not slumber and sleep until our Lord takes us across,
his garland upon his head, his palm in his hand,
wearing the robe of his glory,
and we go within the bridechamber,
and reign with him, all of us together.

Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.193

And:

Hail, day of joy, the blessed bridegroom! –
 Lo, our lamps are ready,
 our vessels are full of oil.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXIX; cf. MPB p.25

And:

Since you knew, O soul who loves God,
 that it is still a weak house, in which you live,
 you lit your lanterns and put oil in your lamps,
 and did not permit them to go out
 until they (the saviours) came and summoned you.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLVIII; cf. MPB p.70

And again:

(My soul) shines like the sun.
 I have lit it, O bridegroom,
 with the excellent oil of purity.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIII; cf. MPB p.80

In one psalm, the oil is explicitly identified with the Holy Spirit, the divine Word, that permits the soul to go in with the bridegroom. Knocking at the door is another metaphor used by Jesus for meditation:³

We knocked at the door, the door was opened to us,
 we went in with the bridegroom.
 We were numbered among the virgins
 in whose lamps oil was found. . . .

Fair is a holy soul
 that has taken unto her the Holy Spirit.
 Fair are the five virgins
 in whose lamps oil was found.
 Fair is the ship laden with treasure,
 the sailor (saviour) being aboard it.

Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.170, 174

In some of these Manichaean psalms, and in later Christian literature too, the “oil” is sometimes interpreted as “faith”. Here, the psalmist addresses the divine *Nous*, the divine Intelligence, more or less synonymous in this instance with the *Logos* (Word):

O *Nous* of light, sun of my heart, light of my soul,
 you are my witness that I have no comfort but you.
 O *Nous*, I have not given in,
 so that my enemies might not deride me.
 O *Nous*, the lamp that you have kindled,
 with the oil of faith, I have not allowed it to go out.

Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.173

The lamp of the soul has been “kindled” by the *Nous*. Through deep faith and love, engendered by meditation and constantly dwelling within, all the “enemies” of the soul – the imperfections of the mind – have been kept at bay. Similarly:

You have lit your lamps, . . .
 you have immersed your vessel in the oil of faith.
 You have cared for the widows,
 you have clothed the orphans.
 You have endured all hardship for the name of God,
 the giver of rewards, the bestower of grace.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCXLV; cf. MPB p.53

And again:

Our Lord the paraclete (mediator, saviour) has come,
 he has sat down upon his throne;
 Let us all pray, my brethren,
 that he may forgive us our sins.
 God anointed him by His Power,
 He made him perfect by the Spirit of His love. . . .

He gave into his hands the Medicine of Life
 that he might heal the wounded.
 He gave light with his Light to our lamps:
 put oil into them by your faith.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXVIII; cf. MPB p.23

The saviour comes for his own souls to forgive their sins. He is anointed by God in the Holy Spirit, which is love. He comes with this pure “Medicine of Life” to heal the wounded souls of this world and to light the lamps of their souls, which remain lit through being kept filled with the oil of faith and meditation.

See also: **anointing** (7.4), **Oil** (3.1).

1. *Matthew* 25:1–13.
2. *Mark* 13:34–37; *Matthew* 24:43–51; *Luke* 12:36–48.
3. *Matthew* 7:7, *KJV*.

Om̐kāṛ(a) (S/H), **Onkāṛ** (Pu) See **Aum̐**.

Om̐kāṛ(a) (S/H) See **Aum̐**.

oral prayer See **vocal prayer**.

orison A literary word for prayer. See **prayer**.

padmāsan(a) (S/H), **padam āsan** (Pu) *Lit.* lotus (*padma*) posture (*āsana*); one of the postures of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

pāñch nām (H), **panj nām** (Pu) *Lit.* five (*pāñch*) names (*nām*); the five names given to the ‘ruling’ deities or powers of the five main spiritual regions, as described by a number of Indian *sants* (saints); five names used as a mental prayer or repetition (S. *smaraṇa*, H. *sumiran*, Pu. *simran*) to bring about concentration of the mind at the eye centre, the focus between the two eyebrows; also refers to the five stages of *Nām*, the divine Word or Name of God, His creative power, as it manifests in the five principal stages of creation.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh speaks of repetition of the five names:

Repeat the five names (*pāñch nām*):
concentrate your soul in the black and white (*shyām set*).
Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:4.156, *SBP* p.222

The “black and white” refers to the eye centre or *do-dal kamal* – the two-petalled ‘lotus’ whose ‘petals’ are black and white.

See also: **Nām bhakti** (►4), **names**, **pañch Shabd** (3.1), **smaraṇa**.

pās-i anfās dāshtan (P) *Lit.* maintaining (*dāshtan*) control (*pās*) of the breaths (*anfās*); guarding the breath; keeping attention on the breath; a Sufi meditative

practice involving concentration on breathing in order to calm the mind. *Anfās* is the plural of *nafās*.

Javād Nūrbakhsh says that *pās-i anfās dāshtan* means

protecting or preserving breaths in order to prevent them from leading to heedlessness. It may also mean preserving the state of contemplation by not disclosing it to anyone. A further meaning of this expression is being mindful or respectful of the breaths of the masters of the path and the proven ones on the way of God, accepting and carrying out their behests.

Javād Nūrbakhsh, Sufi Symbolism, SSE8 p.122

Maybudī's explanation indicates that the expression also refers to a meditative practice of breath control, in which control of the outer breathing leads to control of the subtle 'breath' or life force:

Whoever controls his actions (*ḥarakāt pās dārad*) will attain paradise; and whoever controls his breaths (*pās-i anfās*) will be blessed with the breeze of outpouring grace from the realm of the Unseen and the massing together of the clouds of devotion, from which pours the rain of grace, launching the flood of love (*mihr*).

God creates this flood of love (*sayl-i mihr*) to overwhelm the foundation of earth and water (the body), so that no trace of either should remain, nor any sign of humanity. Physical occupation springs from the body, and zeal from human nature. Give up both, that you may attain Nonbeing and be blessed with the breeze of outpouring grace!

Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 p.115; cf. in SSE8 p.122

Indian Sufi, Ināyat Khān (1882–1927), firmly equates *nafās* (breath) with the Indian *prāṇa*, the subtle life energy permeating the body, and sometimes translated as 'vital breath'. This "breath", he says, has its own light, but a person's vision must be purified by practising *pās-i anfās* before this light can be seen:

'Breath' in the Sufi term is called *nafās*. The breath spreads through the whole body like a tree, and its stem is felt by man, and it is this stem which man in his everyday language calls breath. All the branches of this tree, the mystic calls by different names. A mystic sees the whole body as a plant of the breath. Therefore, in the Sanskrit language, breath is called *prāṇa*, which means the very life. It spreads life and magnetism in all parts of the body, for breath in itself is life, and is magnetism. Deformity of form and feature is often caused by disorder of the breath. Lack of proportion of the body, in form and strength, is also caused by lack of order in the breath. . . .

The mechanism of the body is dependent in its work upon five different aspects of breath, and these aspects are the five different directions of breath. In the *Qur'ān*,¹ and also in the Hebrew scriptures,² these five breaths are known as the five angels. These aspects are thus pictured in their finer work in human life. Often their direction is spoken of by the prophets in symbolical terms, as it is said: "One stands on the left side of man, one on the right, one before, one behind, one within him." ...

Breath is a light in itself, and it becomes projected like the beam from a searchlight thrown upon an object. When the breath is coarse, undeveloped, it is full of material atoms which dim its light; but a developed breath is sometimes no different from the light of the sun but even brighter than that. Breath being a light from another dimension, which is unknown to science today, it cannot be visible to the ordinary physical eyes. The glands of the physical eyes must be cleansed and purified first by *pās-i anḥās* before the eyes can see the light of breath.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK13 pp.137, 138–39, 160

Like many esoteric practices, details of the actual technique are rarely written down since they are more safely learned from a qualified teacher.

See also: **Nafas** (3.1).

1. According to Muslim tradition, five guardian angels, mentioned individually in the *Qur'ān*, have been assigned to watch over every human being. ‘Ināyat Khān interprets these five angels as the five subtle ‘breaths’, *prāṇas*, or *anḥās*.
2. *Babylonian Talmud, Midrash Numbers Rabbah* 2:10; cf. *Zechariah* 6:5.

paṭinissaggānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of renunciation (*paṭinissagga*). See **anupassanā**.

paṭisankhānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of meditation (*paṭisankhā*). See **anupassanā**.

petition In religion and spirituality, a prayer, entreaty, appeal, or request to a deity; an attempt, usually verbal, to communicate a heartfelt need or desire to a deity or other supernatural power; can be spontaneous or formal, spoken or mental; may be for some specific object, goal or desire of this world or for something more spiritual, such as freedom from imperfection, or for the love of God, or the ability to concentrate in prayer or meditation.

It is suggested in *The Pilgrim Continues His Way* that the petition forming the basis of the prayer of Jesus (“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me”) is the most fundamental petition that any imperfect human being can make to God:

The desire and petition of a poor, sinful, humble soul could not be put into words more wise, more clear cut, more exact than these – “have mercy on me”. No other form of words would be as satisfying and full as this.

The Pilgrim Continues His Way, WPW pp.33–34

Spiritual writers have suggested many other petitions that devotees can use to bring humility and spiritual warmth to their hearts. François de Sales suggests:

Sweet Jesus, draw me ever deeper into your heart, where your love may swallow me up, where I may be utterly lost in its enchantment.

François de Sales, Love of God 7:1, LGFS p.271

See also: **prayer**.

pious deeds, pious works Generally interpreted as kind, unselfish or charitable behaviour in this world, the terms ‘pious deeds’ and ‘pious works’ – when used in translations of some more ancient manuscripts – seem at times to refer to spiritual practice or meditation. What would be better rendered as ‘spiritual’ or ‘holy’ is translated as ‘pious’, while ‘practice’ becomes ‘deeds’ or ‘works’. From a literal standpoint, the rendering is correct, but the meaning conveyed is completely different. A similar confusion appears in terms translated as ‘good deeds’ and ‘good works’, which in some contexts make better sense as ‘spiritual practice’.

The confusion between pious deeds and spiritual or holy practice is found, for instance, in translations of Manichaean literature. Here, there is no doubt that the mystic Mānī taught meditation, for the references and allusions are more than a few. Interestingly, since Mānī stated that his teachings were the same as those of Jesus, Buddha and Zarathushtra, he must also have presumed that they too had taught the practice of meditation, like himself. But while meditation is known to have been a part of Buddhist teachings and has remained so, it has not always been recognized as fundamental to the teachings of Zarathushtra, Jesus, and Mānī.

A letter, purporting to have been written by Mānī to his devoted disciple Mār Ammo, speaks of “holy meditation” and “holy practice that men of knowledge (*i.e. gnōsis*) perform”. The terms are rendered in scholarly translations as “pious meditation” and “pious deeds”:

In this time of sin (*i.e.* being in this world), the pure devout one must sit down in holy meditation (*andēshishn*), and should turn away from sin and increase what is holy. . . .

And that is why I have spoken these words, so that everyone may himself pay heed to them and listen attentively to them. For everyone who hears and believes them, and keeps them in his mind, and is active in holy practice shall find salvation from this birth-death (*zahnurd*) and be saved from all sins.

Because I, Mār Mānī, and you Mār Ammo, and all those people of old, as well as those fortunate ones who are born at this time, and likewise also those who will be born in the future, shall be saved from this birth-death through this pure Commandment and through this perfect Wisdom (*i.e.* the divine Word), through this practice and this humility. Because in this birth-death, there is nothing good except for the merit of holy practice that men of knowledge (*i.e.* *gnōsis*) perform.

Those who follow me, Mār Mānī, and hope in God *Ohrmazd*, and want the pure and just Elect (the masters) as leaders, they are the ones who are saved and find salvation from this birth-death, and attain eternal redemption.

Manichaean Letter, MM3 pp.854–57, RMP r; cf. GSR pp.259–60, ML p.58

The meaning of to “sit down in holy meditation” is unambiguous, while the context of the other references to “holy practice” and “this practice” only make sense if the meaning is that of meditation, for no mystic has ever suggested that pious deeds alone can take a soul out of the realm of birth and death. All exponents of the law of *karma*, Mānī included, have said that good deeds are rewarded by good circumstances in future lives – not by “eternal redemption”.

At the end of an open letter from Mānī – his last, sent from prison before his death – he addresses all his followers, as

brothers and sisters, great and small, . . . everyone who has received this good message from me, and who is happy with this teaching and holy practice that I have taught, and who is firm in faith, and free of doubt, to everyone individually, . . .

Mānī, Seal Letter, MBB 18ff.; cf. GSR p.134, ML p.63

The “holy practice” that Mānī taught, again translated in scholarly renderings as “pious action” or “pious deeds”, certainly refers to meditation as the means of contacting the *Vahman* of light or divine Word that was at the heart of Mānī’s teaching.

The same term appears in a parable, part of which is lost, in which a king visits a lowly born, but wealthy man, who fails at first to light the lamps when darkness falls. However, when a thousand lamps are finally lit, the king

rebukes the man, and then forgives him. The king is the *Nous* or *Vahman*, the divine Word, while the wealthy man represents the followers (“hearers”), who “from time to time, become slack and forgetful in their practice, . . . the holy practice that will help the hearers”. The lighting of the lamps is equated with “holy practice”. Again, the conventional scholarly translations have it as “pious action” and “meritorious deeds”.¹

Another fragmentary parable concludes with a comment concerning those who, by the time of death, have not been able to erase their debt of sin completely, but have been able, nonetheless “to find pleasure in the true Word and the holy practice”, otherwise translated obscurely as “the righteous deed”.²

There are many other references to pious and righteous deeds in the ancient literature where the meaning could well be holy or spiritual practice. Such practices have always been a part of the mystical side of the world’s religious traditions. The writer of the psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, who speaks of mystic experiences and revelations in a number of places, uses a similar expression, translated here as “righteous deeds”:

Thy servant has no righteous deeds
to deliver him from the Pit of no forgiveness.

Thanksgiving Hymns 15:17–18, CDSV p.281

The “Pit of no forgiveness” is probably this world rather than hell; but either way, deliverance is only attained through spiritual practice.

See also: **good acts, good deeds** (►4), **logismos, meditation**.

1. *Manichaean Text, MPM (M47:II) 1705ff.*, pp.87–89; cf. *GSR* p.190, *ML* p.33.
2. *Manichaean Text, BMP* pp.293–95; cf. *GSR* p.186.

prabhāsvara (S), **pabhassara** (Pa), **’od gsal** (T), **guāng míng** (C), **kōmyō** (J)
Lit. radiant (*gsal, míng, myō*) light (*’od, guāng, kō*); clear light, luminosity; radiance (*prabhāsvara*); the intrinsic purity of the mind in its primordial nature – pristine, luminous, resplendent, and devoid of all defilements; hence, a practice (also known as light or luminosity *yoga*) by which one may experience the radiance (S. *prabhāsvara*) and emptiness (S. *shūnyatā*) of the deepest and most fundamental level of the intrinsically pure and radiant mind; one of the six *dharma*s (doctrines, practices) or *yogas* of Nāropa. The Tibetan is phonetically rendered as *odsal*.

The notion of an inherently luminous mind (S. *prakṛiti-prabhāsvara-chitta*, T. *’od gsal gyi sems*) has been a part of Buddhism since *Theravāda* times, later being adopted by the *Mahāyāna* (especially the *tathāgata-garbha* school) and tantric traditions. It is a doctrine common to many Buddhist schools that

the essential nature of the primordial mind or awareness is luminosity and emptiness (*shūnyatā*), devoid of human impurity, attachment or clinging to anything, and unfettered by dualistic and conceptual thought and perception. The *tathāgata-garbha* (embryo of buddhahood) tradition described all sentient beings as being innately enlightened, just as the adult is essentially present in the embryo. This innate enlightenment or *buddha-nature* (*buddhadhātu*) is only obscured by imperfections and impurity of various kinds.

According to a passage in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, commonly quoted in this context, the Buddha describes the pristine mind as luminous (*pabhassara*):

Monks, this mind (*citta*) is luminous (*pabhassara*),
but it is defiled by incoming defilements (*upakkilesa*).

Anguttara Nikāya 1:49, PTSA1 p.10

These defilements – greed, attachment, hatred, desire, causing harm, and misconduct of various kinds, gross and subtle, *etc.* – are understood to arise as the result of spiritual ignorance. The Buddha also says of someone who applies his mind to concentration (*samādhi*):

His mind becomes malleable, wieldy, and luminous (*pabhassara*), not brittle but properly concentrated for the destruction of the impurities (*āsava*).

Anguttara Nikāya 3:102, PTSA1 p.257; cf. NDBB p.338

It is, he says, like a goldsmith, who works the gold until it becomes

malleable, wieldy, and luminous (*pabhassara*), pliant, and properly fit for work. Then whatever kind of ornament the goldsmith wishes to make from it – whether a bracelet, earrings, a necklace, or a golden garland – he can achieve his purpose.

Anguttara Nikāya 3:101, PTSA1 p.254, NDBB p.336

Among the *Mahāyāna* scriptures, the *Ashṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* says that “the thought of enlightenment (*bodhichitta*) is no thought, because its essential nature is brightly luminous (*prabhāsvara*).” It is a state of no-mind (*achittatā*), beyond both existence and nonexistence.¹

In Tibetan Buddhism, several variants of the practice of *’od gsal* are prevalent among the *anuttara-yoga tantra* techniques of *Kagyü*, *Sakya*, and *Geluk* schools. The goal, here, is to attain full awareness of the primal, clear, luminous, and empty mind:

Luminosity (*’od gsal*) is the spontaneous, self-illuminating, enlightened *buddha-nature* which can be seen only with the ultimate intuitive

perspective or the deepest meditation. . . . Luminosity is regarded as the last stage of *sampanna-krama* (completion stage) of *anuttara-yoga tantras*, and its practice leads directly to the experience of *sambhoga-kāya* (enjoyment body, body of bliss) and *dharmakāya* (Reality body).

Ringu Tulku, Six Yogas of Naropa, SYNRP p.42

The original practice was brought to Tibet by the Indian Buddhist *mahāsiddha* Tilopa (988–1069), who transmitted it to his disciple Nāropa (c. 1016–1100), who taught it as one of his six *dharma*s or *yoga*s. According to Tilopa's *Mahāmudrā Instructions* to Nāropa:

The darkness of a thousand aeons is powerless
to dim the crystal clarity of the sun's heart;
And likewise, aeons of *saṃsāra* have no power
to veil the clear light ('*od gsal*) of the mind's essence.

Although space has been designated empty,
in reality it is inexpressible;
Although the nature of mind is called clear light ('*od gsal*),
its every ascription is baseless verbal fiction.

A single lamp dispels the darkness of a thousand aeons;
Likewise, a single flash of the mind's clear light ('*od gsal*)
erases aeons of karmic conditioning and spiritual blindness.

Tilopa, Mahāmudrā Instructions, TMTN

The practice of '*od gsal* is the fourth of the six *dharma*s or *yoga*s of Nāropa, following those of *gtum mo* (inner heat), *sgyu lus* (illusory body), and *rmi lam* (dream). In the *Guhyasamāja* tantric system, where the '*od gsal* practice follows that of the illusory body, it is said that the impure illusory (subtle) body is purified when it is absorbed into the clear light. However, there are several variations in the presentation, order, and description of the six *dharma*s.

Like the other *dharma*s or *yoga*s of Nāropa, the '*od gsal* techniques involve: the use of *bīja* (seed) *mantras*; direction of the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy); concentration at the lower *chakras*; visualization of meditation deities (*yi dam*); and so on. The goal is to enter and to keep the focus of attention in the central channel (*nāḍī*) of *prāṇa* that runs along the spine. However, the texts covering the various techniques are mostly obscure, and the help of a qualified *lama* is clearly indicated. In his commentary on the *Six Yogas of Nāropa*, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) writes:

The unique teaching of the *anuttara tantra* for the realization of the great innate bliss requires mainly the entering, remaining, and

dissolving of the *prāṇa* in the central channel. . . . The explanations on this subject are not very clear in most of the pith-instructions. However, there is a very good one that describes the process as follows.

The *yogī* should visualize himself as the father and mother *yi dam*. At the *dharma* wheel of the heart centre in the central channel stands a blue *hūṃ* syllable (*bīja-mantra*) on the sun disc. From this *hūṃ* syllable emanate beams of light shining upon all the cosmos and purifying them; then the beams enter and are absorbed into the bodies of all sentient beings.

Thereupon, all the sentient beings melt (and are absorbed) into the mother *yi dam*. Then, in the downward absorbing process, the head of the *yi dam* vanishes, then the neck, the chest, *etc.*, one by one, and are finally absorbed in the *hūṃ* syllable. At the same time, in the upward-absorbing process the toes first vanish into the leg, then the leg into the thigh, thigh into hips, hips into belly, and finally all are absorbed into the *hūṃ* syllable. Thereon, the lower part of the *hūṃ* syllable, the vowel *ū*, vanishes into the *ha*, and the *ha* vanishes into the half-moon; the half-moon then vanishes into the *thig le* (S. *bindu*, drop, sphere, or focus of *prāṇa*) and the *thig le* vanishes upward into the *nāda* (sound). Since this visualization of the absorbing process is concentrated upon the heart centre in the central channel, if one can stabilize the visualization, the *prāṇas* of the *ro ma* (S. *pingalā*, right-hand *nāḍī*) and *rkyang ma* (S. *idā*, left-hand *nāḍī*) will all enter, remain and dissolve in the heart centre in the central channel; the four voids will successively arise; the light of path will augment. At this time, with blissful mind, one should unwaveringly meditate upon the visualization.

Tsongkhapa, On the Six Yogas of Nāropa; cf. ETTT pp.238–40

Clearly, full comprehension of such descriptions require both a teacher and some personal experience – something that is true of many tantric texts.

See also: **Nā ro chos drug.**

1. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 5–6; cf. *PWEL* p.84, in *MBMR* p.xxiii.

prāṇ(a) yoga (S/H) *Lit.* yoga of the breath (*prāṇa*); *prāṇa* is both the physical breath and the subtle life energy in the body; usually called *prāṇāyāma*. See **prāṇāyāma**.

prāṇāyām(a) (S/H) *Lit.* control or extension (*āyāma*) of the breath or vital energy (*prāṇa*); increasing of vital energy; suspension, restraint or control of the

breath; control of physical breathing, leading to control of the subtle *prāṇa*, the subtle bodily life energy:

Prāṇāyāma refers to exhalation (*rechaka*), inhalation (*pūraka*) and retention (*kumbhaka*) of breath (*prāṇa*), which are means (*upāya*) to the control of the *prāṇa* (*prāṇa-nigraha*).

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 204, VSY p.113

Prāṇa – also called *vāyu* (air, wind) – refers both to breath and to the subtle energies of the life force within the body. *Prāṇāyāma* is mentioned in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* as one of the eight primary aspects of *yoga*.¹ It is also an integral part of *haṭha yoga* and several other forms of *yoga*, and is described in such texts as the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, the *Shiva Saṃhitā*, and many others.²

Prāṇa is the life energy that flows through and energizes the *chakras*, the three main spinal currents of *idā*, *pingalā* and *sushumṇā*, and the 72,000 *nāḍīs* or smaller channels that form the network of *prāṇa* throughout the body. The role of *prāṇa* is primarily that of maintaining and organizing the biological functioning of the body.

For many practitioners, *prāṇāyāma* is used only as an aid to physical health, relaxation, and mental well-being. No attempt is made to use control of the breath to become conscious of the *chakras* or the subtle physical realm with which they are associated. In order to use the *prāṇas* for spiritual ascent, the practitioner tries to awaken consciousness of the pranic energy at each of the *chakras* in turn. Starting with the lowest, the rectal or *mūlādhāra chakra*, he rises up by degrees, *chakra* by *chakra*, until he arrives at the eye centre or *ājñā chakra*.

The goal of *prāṇāyāma* is to unite the *prāṇa* and mind (*manas* or *chitta*) in the central *nāḍī*, known as the *sushumṇā*. The mind and *prāṇa* then rise up the *sushumṇā* to the *ājñā chakra* between the eyebrows, where they come into contact with the sound of the creative power (*Aum*). By merging with the *Aum*, the mind and soul are led higher:

It has been said elsewhere:³ “The channel called *sushumṇā*, leading upward, serving as the passage for the *prāṇa*, passes through the palate. By means of it (the *sushumṇā*), by merging the *prāṇa* and the mind (*manas*) into the syllable *Aum*, he proceeds upwards. By causing the tip of the tongue to turn back against the palate, and by tightly controlling the senses, let greatness perceive greatness (the soul perceive the Divine). Thence, he goes on to selflessness.”

On account of this selflessness, he no longer experiences pleasure and pain. He attains absoluteness (*kevalatva*). For it has been said: “Having first fixed the breath (*anila*, i.e. *prāṇa*) that has been

restrained, having crossed the limit, let him join the limitless in (the crown of) the head.”

Maitrī Upanishad 6:21

The source of the bodily *prāṇas* is in the ‘sky’ of the body, the *chidākāsha* (lit. sky of consciousness), a little above the *ājñā chakra*, which lies between the two eyebrows. This puts a limit on the ascent that can be made with the help of the *prāṇas*. Those who rise up through the *chakras* along the *sushumṇā* by taking the help of the *prāṇas*, finally experience the light and bliss of *chidākāsha*. From there, by deeper concentration and by merging into the divine Sound of *Aum*, it is possible to pierce through the light, and reach the astral plane. Following the light still further, the soul can find its way to *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus. With suitable guidance, a few may be able to go further and reach the causal realm of universal mind. Only by contact with higher aspects of the divine Sound or Word that comes from beyond this region can the soul go any further.

Mystics who teach the practice of the divine Sound start their disciples at the eye centre, and teach them to go up from there. In modern times, very few people have either the time and dedication or the necessary purity of mind and body to awaken the energy of the *chakras* and the *prāṇas*. Rather than go down into the lower *chakras* and then try to rise up, it is easier to take the help of the Sound and rise up directly from the eye centre, which is the natural seat of the mind and soul in the waking condition. But for this to happen, the blessings of a master of the Word are required. Encumbered with the *karma* and impressions of many previous lifetimes, nobody has the purity of mind to be able to do this alone.

In Indian yogic practice, yogis generally begin by concentrating on the *mūlādhāra chakra* (the rectal centre). Here, they are able to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī*, the potential energy of *prāṇa*, coiled like a compressed spring, so to speak, ready to rise up. Having released this ‘spring’, they are then in a position to use its energy to rise up through the *chakras*, along the central *nāḍī* known as the *sushumṇā*. This is performed by breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) and by holding the attention at each *chakra* until that centre ‘opens’. The *prāṇa* or *kuṇḍalinī* then rises to this centre, and the yogis then continue their practice at the next higher centre.

The theory is straightforward, but in practice things do not always turn out so simply. Individuals respond differently to the practice, and impurities of the body and mind can cause blockages and other problems. This is why it is always recommended that a competent teacher be sought before attempting *prāṇāyāma* or any associated discipline. Moreover, even before beginning such practices, the aspiring yogi, under the watchful eye of his teacher, needs to achieve a proper level of proficiency in the cleansing, strengthening, and balancing exercises of *hatha yoga*. Impatience to move on to the next stage before

one stage is mastered is the natural failing of an eager student, and provides another good reason why the exercises should be practised under the personal supervision of one who knows the way, and can provide personal guidance.

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* provides some considerable detail concerning the various exercises that comprise *prāṇāyāma*, starting from the basics. For the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, the writer advises that a yogi should first of all choose a pleasant site in a well-governed kingdom. Similar passages are found in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other texts:⁴

In the centre of the enclosure, let him sink a well and dig a tank. Let the hut be neither very high nor very low: let it be free from insects. It should be completely plastered over with cow dung. In a hut thus built and situated in such a hidden place, let him practise *prāṇāyāma*.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:6–7, GSV pp.37–38

The yogi should also begin his efforts at the right time of year. The encouraging assertions of success and other benefits are a standard part of such treatises and should not be taken too literally:

The practice of *yoga* should be started by a beginner in spring (*vas-anta*) or autumn (*sharad*). By so doing, he will attain success; and verily he will not become liable to diseases.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:9; cf. GSV p.38

The various cleansing practices of *haṭha yoga* (*shaṭ-karma*) should then be practised and perfected, and the initial purification practices of *prāṇāyāma* can be commenced. Firstly, the *nāḍīs*, the subtle channels of *prāṇa*, require cleansing by means of breathing exercises, together with the repetition of *bīja-mantras*. *Bīja-mantras* are single-syllable or seed (*bīja*) *mantras*. Each *chakra* is associated with one of the five subtle elements (*tattvas*), and each *tattva* is assigned its own *bīja-mantra*. Repetition of the *mantra* also includes visualization of the *mantra* itself, along with other visualizations. Descriptions of yogic and tantric practices of this nature are invariably difficult to follow, only making real sense to those who have been personally taught how to perform them. Nevertheless, they do provide a window of understanding into the general nature of these practices. The text is set as a dialogue between *guru* and disciple:

(Gheraṇḍa said): He should sit on a seat of *kusha* grass, or an antelope skin, or tiger skin or a blanket, or on bare earth, calmly and quietly, facing east or north. Having purified the *nāḍīs*, let him begin *prāṇāyāma*.

Chandaḥkāpālī said: O Ocean of Mercy! How are *nāḍīs* purified, what is this purification of *nāḍīs*? I want to learn all this; tell me about it.

Gheraṇḍa said: The *vāyu* (i.e. *prāṇa*) cannot enter the *nāḍīs* so long as they are full of impurities. How then can *prāṇāyāma* be practised? How can knowledge of the *tattvas* arise? Therefore, the *nāḍīs* should first be purified, and then *prāṇāyāma* should be practised.

The purification of the *nāḍīs* is of two kinds: *samanu* and *nirmanu*. The *samanu* is done by a mental process using *bīja-mantras* (seed *mantras*, single-syllable *mantras*). The *nirmanu* is performed by physical cleansings. . . .

Repeating and contemplating upon the *vāyu-bīja* (the air *bīja*, ‘*yaṃ*’), full of energy and of a smoky colour, let him draw in breath by the left nostril, repeating the *bīja* sixteen times. This is *pūraka*. Let him restrain the breath for a period of sixty-four repetitions of the *mantra*. This is *kumbhaka*. Then let him expel the air by the right nostril slowly during a period occupied by repeating the *mantra* thirty-two times. (This is *rechaka*.)

The root of the navel is the seat of the *agni* (fire) *tattva*. Raising the fire from that place, join the *prithvī* (earth) *tattva* with it; then contemplate on this mixed light. Then, repeating the *agni-bīja* (‘*raṃ*’) sixteen times, let him draw in breath by the right nostril, and retain it for the period of sixty-four repetitions of the *mantra*, and then expel it by the left nostril for a period of thirty-two repetitions of the *mantra*.

Then, fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose and there visualizing the luminous reflection of the moon, let him inhale through the left nostril, repeating the *bīja* ‘*thaṃ*’ sixteen times; let him retain it by repeating the *bīja* ‘*vaṃ*’ sixty-four times; at the same time, visualize the nectar flowing from the moon at the tip of the nose and running through all the vessels of the body, purifying them. Thus contemplating, let him expel the air by repeating the *prithvī bīja* (*laṃ*) thirty-two times.

By these three *prāṇāyāmas* the *nāḍīs* are purified. Then sitting firmly in a posture, let him begin regular *prāṇāyāma*.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:33–36, 39–45; cf. *GSV* pp.42–43

Prāṇāyāma thus consists of three parts: inhaling (*pūraka*), retaining (*kumbhaka*) and exhaling (*rechaka*). In the practice described, the mind is kept concentrated by the repetition of *bīja-mantras*. Though the instructions are not entirely clear, it seems that the attention is first held at the air *chakra* (the heart or *hṛidaya chakra*), then at the fire *chakra* (the navel or *maṇipūraka chakra*), then at the earth *chakra* (the *mūlādhāra chakra*), and finally at the tip of the nose. The process is then repeated.

The instructions are incomplete, providing only an outline, and would need the tutelage of a *guru* to be performed correctly. In fact, practically all of the texts of this nature stress the need of a competent *guru*. Nevertheless, it is clear that a cyclic process of breath control is practised, while shifting

the attention from centre to centre within the body. There is little doubt that such exercises, performed repetitively, over a long period of time, would focus the attention entirely within the body, bringing its subtle aspects into consciousness.

Having described a similar series of breathing exercises, the *Shiva Saṃhitā* concludes:

These *kumbhakas* should be practised four times – once early in the morning at sunrise, then at midday, the third at sunset, and the fourth at midnight.

When this has been practised daily, for three months with regularity, the *nāḍīs* (vessels) of the body will readily and surely be purified.

Shiva Saṃhitā 3:25–26, SSV p.27

Of all the breathing exercises, it is the *kumbhaka* (retention) that is always given the most prominence. Eight types of *kumbhaka* are described, of which there are several subdivisions. Some of the details of the exercises vary from one text to another, but the essential aspects remain the same. Some are done with the repetition of a *mantra*, others without. Different *mantras* may be used for different exercises. Sometimes, the *mantras* are simply letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, providing a convenient way to count the time and the number of repetitions. The times taken to inhale, retain and exhale also vary, as do the relative amounts of time given to each phase. Respiration is done through the mouth and one or other of the nostrils. The attention is focused at different centres. Different *āsanas* (postures) are adopted at different times of the day, and various muscular exercises (*mudrās* and *bandhas*) are performed between or during the exercises. The exercises bring purity to both the subtle and gross aspects of the body, and consciousness expands to an awareness of the realm of the subtle physical energies of the *prāṇa*.

Lengths of time are measured in *mātras*, the time taken to repeat a single letter of the alphabet, which is more or less one second. Thus, speaking of an exercise performed without a *mantra*, the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* says:

The period of *pūraka*, *kumbhaka* and *rechaka* may be extended from one to one hundred *mātras*.

The best is twenty *mātras*: i.e. *pūraka* 20 seconds, *kumbhaka* 80, and *rechaka* 40 seconds. The sixteen *mātras* is middling, i.e. 16, 64, and 32. The twelve *mātras* is the lowest, i.e. 12, 48, 24. Thus the *prāṇāyāma* is of three sorts.

By practising the lowest *prāṇāyāma* for some time, the body begins to perspire copiously; by practising the middling, the body begins to quiver (especially, there is a feeling of a quivering along

the spinal cord); by the highest *prāṇāyāma*, one leaves the ground, *i.e.* there is levitation. These signs attend the success of these three sorts of *prāṇāyāma*.

By *prāṇāyāma*, the power of levitation is attained; by *prāṇāyāma*, diseases are cured; by *prāṇāyāma*, *shakti* (*kuṇḍalinī*) is awakened; by *prāṇāyāma*, calmness of the mind and higher mental faculties is obtained; by this, mind becomes full of bliss; verily the practitioner of *prāṇāyāma* is happy.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:54–57; cf. GSV p.45

Different results are claimed for different exercises, especially the variations of *kumbhaka*. For instance, describing *ujjāyī-kumbhaka*:

Close the mouth, draw in the external air through both nostrils, and pull up the internal air from the lungs and throat; retain them in the mouth.

Then, having washed the mouth (*i.e.* expelled air through the mouth) perform *jālandhara* (*bandha*). Let him perform *kumbhaka* with all his might and retain the air as long as possible.

All works are accomplished by *ujjāyī-kumbhaka*. He is never attacked by mucus diseases, or nervous diseases, or indigestion, or dysentery, or consumption, or cough; or fever or (enlarged) spleen. Let a man perform *ujjāyī* to destroy decay and death.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:69–72; cf. GSV pp.47–48

Bhrāmarī-kumbhaka (bee-like retention), on the other hand, results in the hearing of subtle, inner sounds:

At past midnight, in a place where the sounds of animals, *etc.* cannot be heard, let the *yogī* practise *pūraka* and *kumbhaka*, closing the ears with the hands.

Then he will hear various internal sounds in his right ear. The first sound will be like that of crickets, then that of a lute, then that of thunder, then that of a drum, then that of a beetle, then that of bells, then those of gongs made of bell-metal, trumpets, kettle-drums, *mṛidanga*, military drums, and *duṇḍubhi*, *etc.*

Thus various sounds are cognized by daily practice of this *kumbhaka*. Last of all is heard the *anāhata* (unstruck) sound rising from the heart. Of this sound there is a resonance; in that resonance there is a light; in that light, the mind should become immersed. When the mind is absorbed, then it reaches the highest seat of *Vishṇu*. By success in this *bhrāmarī-kumbhaka*, one gets success in *samādhi*.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:78–82; cf. GSV p.49

The *bhrāmarī-kumbhaka* practice entails slow and deep inhalation through the nose; then, blocking the outer ears with the fingers, the practitioner exhales, making a humming sound like a bee. The attention is focused on the breath and on any inner sounds that may be heard.

Finally, when all the exercises are done, the yogi can concentrate “between the two eyebrows”, at the *ājñā chakra*, the seat of the mind and soul in the body:

Having performed *kumbhaka* with comfort, let him withdraw the mind from all objects and fix it in the space between the two eyebrows. This causes the mind to come to a standstill, and gives happiness. For, by thus joining the *manas* (mind) with the *ātman* (soul), the bliss of *yoga* is certainly obtained.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:83; cf. *GSV* p.49

And so the descriptions continue. But whatever the various differences between them, all texts agree that the highest of all the *kumbhakas* is complete suspension of the breath, known as *kevala-kumbhaka*. At this point, the mind also becomes completely still and enters *samādhi* (blissful inner absorption). This state is one of complete stillness:

When *prāṇa* moves, *chitta* (mind) moves. When *prāṇa* is without movement, *chitta* is without movement. By this (steadiness of *prāṇa*), the *yogī* attains steadiness.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:2, *HYPM* p.150

Because the mind is given energy by *prāṇa* and *prāṇa* is given energy by the mind, breath control is a powerful way of stilling the mind. A reflection of this is seen in the steady breathing of a relaxed person, and the uneven breathing of someone who is under stress. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* explains:

Through restraining the *prāṇa*, thought-counterthought is restrained and through restraint of thought-counterthought, *prāṇa* is restrained.

(Movement of the) *chitta* has two causes, *vāsanā* (impressions) and *prāṇa*. When one of the two is destroyed or inactivated, the other will also become immobile.

Where the mind is stilled, then the *prāṇa* is suspended there; and where *prāṇa* is suspended there, then the mind is still.

Mind and *prāṇa* are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is *prāṇa*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:21–24, *HYPM* p.499

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* also says:

Perfection of isolated retention (*kumbhaka*) is freedom from inhalation and exhalation. Verily, this *prāṇāyāma* spoken of is *kevala-kumbhaka*.

Nothing in the three planes of existence is unobtainable by him who has mastery of *kevala-kumbhaka* and who can retain the breath as desired.

There is no doubt, the state of *rāja yoga* is also attained (through *kevala-kumbhaka*). By (this) retention, *kuṇḍalinī* is aroused, *sushumṇā* becomes unobstructed and perfection of *haṭha yoga* takes place.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:73–75; cf. *HYPM* pp.268, 270

Though the style of these ancient texts is archaic, the practice they describe remains relevant. Fundamentally, all human beings are still constituted in the same way, physically and mentally, and everybody breathes in and out. Using modern language, Swami Vivekananda describes something of the thought underlying the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. Interestingly, his description predates those concepts of modern physics that see space as the unseen energy field within which all material manifestation arises – though physicists acknowledge that the power or energy by which this manifestation arises is a mystery. Swami Vivekananda identifies this hidden power as *prāṇa*. It is a stepped-down energy of *Aum*, the divine creative power:

Prāṇāyāma is not, as many think, something about breath; breath indeed has very little to do with it, if anything. Breathing is only one of the many exercises through which we get to the real *prāṇāyāma*. *Prāṇāyāma* means the control of *prāṇa*. According to the philosophers of India, the whole universe is composed of two materials, one of which they call *ākāśha* (space, ether). It is the omnipresent, all-penetrating existence. Everything that has form, everything that is the result of combination, is evolved out of this *ākāśha*. It is the *ākāśha* that becomes the air, that becomes the liquids, that becomes the solids; it is the *ākāśha* that becomes the sun, the earth, the moon, the stars, the comets; it is the *ākāśha* that becomes the human body, the animal body, the plants, every form that we see, everything that can be sensed, everything that exists. It cannot be perceived; it is so subtle that it is beyond all ordinary perception; it can only be seen when it has become gross, has taken form. At the beginning of creation there is only this *ākāśha*. At the end of the cycle (of creation and dissolution), the solids, the liquids and the gases all ‘melt’ into the *ākāśha* again, and the next creation similarly proceeds out of this *ākāśha*.

By what power is this *ākāśha* manufactured into this universe? By the power of *prāṇa*. Just as *ākāśha* is the infinite, omnipresent

material of this universe, so is this *prāṇa* the infinite, omnipresent, manifesting power of this universe. At the beginning and at the end of a cycle everything becomes *ākāsha*, and all the forces that are in the universe resolve back into the *prāṇa*; in the next cycle, out of this *prāṇa* is evolved everything that we call energy, everything that we call force. It is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as motion; it is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of *prāṇa*. The sum total of all forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state, is called *prāṇa*. When there was neither aught nor naught, when darkness was covering darkness, what existed then? That *ākāsha* existed without motion. The physical motion of the *prāṇa* was stopped, but it existed all the same.

At the end of a cycle the energies now displayed in the universe quiet down and become potential. At the beginning of the next cycle they start up, strike upon the *ākāsha*, and out of the *ākāsha* evolve these various forms, and as the *ākāsha* changes, this *prāṇa* changes also into all these manifestations of energy. The knowledge and control of this *prāṇa* is really what is meant by *prāṇāyāma*.

This opens to us the door to almost unlimited power. Suppose, for instance, a man understood the *prāṇa* perfectly, and could control it, what power on earth would not be his? He would be able to move the sun and stars out of their places, to control everything in the universe, from the atoms to the biggest suns, because he would control the *prāṇa*. This is the end and aim of *prāṇāyāma*. When the *yogī* becomes perfect, there will be nothing in nature not under his control. If he orders the gods or the souls of the departed to come, they will come at his bidding. All the forces of nature will obey him as slaves. When the ignorant see these powers of the *yogī*, they call them miracles. . . .

How to control the *prāṇa* is the one idea of *prāṇāyāma*. All the trainings and exercises in this regard are for that one end. Each man must begin where he stands, must learn how to control the things that are nearest to him. This body is very near to us, nearer than anything in the external universe, and this mind is the nearest of all. The *prāṇa* which is working this mind and body is the nearest to us of all the *prāṇa* in this universe. This little wave of the *prāṇa* which represents our own energies, mental and physical, is the nearest to us of all the waves of the infinite ocean of *prāṇa*. If we can succeed in controlling that little wave, only then can we hope to control the whole of *prāṇa*. The *yogī* who has done this gains perfection; no longer is he under any power. He becomes almost almighty, almost all-knowing. . . .

Perhaps some of you have read that in *prāṇāyāma*, when drawing in the breath, you must fill your whole body with *prāṇa*. In the English translations, *prāṇa* is given as breath, and you are inclined to ask how that is to be done. The fault is with the translator. Every part of the body can be filled with *prāṇa*, this vital force, and when you are able to do that, you can control the whole body.

Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga*, CWSVI pp.147–49, 153

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**, **bīja-mantra**, **haṭha yoga**, **kuṇḍalinī yoga**, **rāja yoga**.

1. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 2:29, 49–52.
2. E.g. *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* 6–16; *Brahmavidyā Upanishad* 16–26; *Darshana Upanishad* 1:4–5, 5:1–14, 6:1–51; *Kshurikā Upanishad* 2–5; *Maitrī Upanishad* 6:18; *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 1:1; *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 1:1–3, 14–17, 26; *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 2:8–10; *Tejobindu Upanishad* 31–33; *Trishikhi-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 2:53–133; *Yogakuṇḍalī Upanishad* 1:19–39; *Yogatattva Upanishad* 32–46.
3. Cf. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 8:6.6; *Kāṭha Upanishad* 2.3.16; *Prashna Upanishad* 3:7; *Taittirīya Upanishad* 1:6.1.
4. E.g. *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* 17–19; *Darshana Upanishad* 6:88–91; *Bhagavad Gītā* 5:27; *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 2:10.

pratyāhār(a) (S/H) *Lit.* bringing back, withdrawing, reverting, withholding; spiritually, restraining or controlling the mind's involvement with the physical senses; turning the outgoing tendencies of the mind inward; turning the attention of the mind from external objects of the senses and taking it inward; abstraction of the mind from the senses; from *prati* (opposite) + *āhāra* (attraction), implying the inward attraction of the mind, as opposed to its outward attraction; an essential part of all *yoga*, enumerated by Patañjali as the fifth essential aspect of his eightfold (*ashtāṅga*) system.

Man's five senses provide him with five windows of perception onto the external world, and consequently with five avenues of sensory temptation. For many people, the sensory world comprises the whole of existence and experience. Some sensations attract, others repel. Yogic meditation involves learning how to detach the mind from the sensory world, and from the mental faculties that take cognizance of the sensory input, so that the senses are powerless to disturb the equilibrium of the inner mind.

Superficially, it may seem as if *pratyāhāra* is control of the senses by the mind; in fact, it is more the withdrawal of the mind into itself. Just as a person absorbed in a novel or in anything that completely occupies the attention becomes unaware of the world around him, so too is the meditator able to

withdraw the mind from the senses and focus it within itself. The difference is that the meditator is focusing the mind within the mind; in other instances of absorption, there is something external that captures the attention.

Pratyāhāra is listed by Patañjali as one of eight essential aspects of *yoga*.¹ Having been highlighted by Patañjali, it appears in many other yogic texts, either as a part of *ashṭāṅga* (eightfold)² or of *ṣaḍāṅga* (sixfold) *yoga*,³ the latter being first mentioned in the *Maitrī Upanishad*.⁴ The difference between the two lists is that the sixfold version does not include the *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (observances) as actual yogic or meditational practices. It regards them as external and moral virtues to be followed, essential for successful meditation, but not forms of meditation in themselves.

In both lists, *pratyāhāra* leads on to *dhāraṇā* (concentration), which deepens into *dhyāna* (contemplation), and culminates in *samādhi* (complete absorption). *Pratyāhāra* implies the complete disassociation of the mind from the senses. The mind becomes focused within, absorbed in itself, no longer distracted by input from the senses. It is a peaceful state, and a prelude to deeper concentration, contemplation, and absorption.

There are many techniques for attaining this degree of interior focus. In the initial stages of *rāja yoga*, the mind is concentrated on the breathing and on the *prāṇas* (subtle life energies), and is held there by willpower and by the bliss that arises during the practice. In the more advanced stages, the mind communes with the inner *Nāda* (Sound). In *bhakti yoga*, the mind, contemplating the focus of its devotion, becomes absorbed in bliss and love. Here, *pratyāhāra* has deepened into concentration, contemplation, and complete absorption.

The senses (*indriyas*) consist of both the organ of perception, such as the eye, and the subtle or mental counterpart in which the experience registers – the mind’s eye, so to speak. In fact, the form or sensory impression of anything is not in that thing itself, nor even in the brain, but in the mind. Something seemingly external triggers the formation of the mental image. Patañjali describes this mental counterpart to the external senses as an imitation of true consciousness, and says that *pratyāhāra* is the ability to detach the mental counterpart from the physical organ, and hence to switch the mind away from engagement with external sensory input:

Pratyāhāra is when the (mental counterparts to the) senses (*indriyas*) get detached from their objects, and become identified, as it were, with the form of their own mind (*chitta*).

From this arises complete control over the senses (*indriya-vasha*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:54–55

The *Maitrī Upanishad* notes that the process is similar to what happens in dreams when the mind is detached from the physical senses, and everything

is perceived through their mental counterparts.⁵ The significant difference, however, is that sleep is a state of unconsciousness, while in *pratyāhāra*, the practitioner is moving towards a state of superconsciousness. Many texts have attempted to explain the nature of *pratyāhāra*:

Withholding the mind from sensory objects is *pratyāhāra*.

Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad 1:1

Pratyāhāra is the state where sensory organs such as the eye do not concern themselves with externals, but turn themselves inwards. Like the sun withdrawing his lustre during the third quarter of the day, so does the *yogī* ... withdraw from all mental activity.

Yogachūḍāmaṇi Upanishad 120–21

As you practise *pratyāhāra*, you will cease to be attached to external objects. Practice of concentration will bring you purity of heart, and meditation will enable you to unite yourself with the Divine. Thus, when your mind and heart become calm and pure, you will learn to dwell in the consciousness of God. Then will you find divine love.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa 3:6, SBWG p.50

Although the commonly understood meaning of *pratyāhāra* is withdrawal of the mental counterparts from their physical organs, some texts have provided alternative or extended descriptions. The *Tejobindu Upanishad* lists *pratyāhāra* as the twelfth part of a fifteen-part *yoga*, and depicts it as seeing the divine presence in everything:

That blissful state of consciousness in which one perceives the *Ātman* (the supreme Self or Soul) in sense objects should be known as *pratyāhāra*, and practised again and again.⁶

Tejobindu Upanishad 1:34

The *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* maintains that there are five kinds of *pratyāhāra*, all entailing some form of withdrawal of the attention:

Pratyāhāra is of five kinds. It is withdrawal of the mental organs from attachment to the sense objects. Contemplating upon everything that one sees as *Ātman* is *pratyāhāra*. Renouncing the fruits of obligatory daily observances is *pratyāhāra*. Turning away from all sensual pleasures is *pratyāhāra*. *Dhāraṇā* (concentration, holding the *prāṇa*) in the eighteen vital places, in the correct manner and order, is *pratyāhāra* – viz., the feet, the toes, the ankles, the calves, the knees, the thighs, the anus, the penis, the navel, the heart, the cavity of the

throat, the palate, the nose, the eyes, the middle of the eyebrows, the forehead, and the top of the head.

Shāṇḍilya Upanishad 1:69; cf. *TMU* p.143, *YU* (8:1–2) p.482

The *Darshana Upanishad* says that *pratyāhāra* includes seeing *Brahman* in everything, doing everything in the name of *Brahman*, performing daily observances as if for *Brahman*, holding the *prāṇa* at various vital places within the body, and holding the ‘individual’ *ātman* (soul, self) in union with the greater, divine *Ātman*.⁷

The *Trishikhi-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* says that, “The facing inward of the mind (*chitta*) is *pratyāhāra*,” also agreeing with the *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* that this entails holding the *prāṇa* at the eighteen different vital places in the body.⁸ As well as focusing on the eighteen vital points, the *Vasishṭha Saṃhitā* also relates *pratyāhāra* to a kind of mental worship in which various rites are performed entirely in the imagination (*mānasika pūjā*, mental worship). This may include bathing, dressing, decoration, prostration before, and worship of one’s chosen deity. In another variant, the *Kumbhaka Paddhati* uses *pratyāhāra* synonymously with *kumbhaka* (retention), one of the primary breathing exercises of *prāṇāyāma*.⁹ All these share the same essential meaning – the withdrawal of the attention from externals so that the mind may rest quietly within itself.

Pratyāhāra is a state of being depicted in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and some other yogic texts¹⁰ as a tortoise withdrawing its limbs. It is a prelude to true spiritual wisdom:

He who can withdraw his senses from their objects,
like a tortoise can withdraw its limbs on all sides:
His wisdom (*prajñā*) is firmly established. . . .

The wayward senses forcefully draw the mind even of one
who is striving earnestly on the path.
Having controlled them all,
he should become steadfastly devoted to me.
The wisdom (*prajñā*) of one whose senses are under control
is firmly established.

Bhagavad Gītā 2:58–61

The descriptions may sound simple enough, but the mind is in the habit of wandering among the senses and chattering incessantly to itself in a constant flow of thoughts, and the practice of stilling the mind in quiet withdrawal is notoriously difficult. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* hints at something of the inner struggle accompanying the attempt to withdraw the mind from all externals:

Now I will tell you about the *yoga* of *pratyāhāra* – this is the best. By its knowledge, all passions such as lust *etc.* are destroyed.

First bring the *chitta* (mind) under control by withdrawing it whenever it wanders away, drawn by the various objects of sight.

Praise or censure, sweet words or foul – withdraw the mind from all of these, and bring the *chitta* under the control of the soul (*ātman*).

From sweet smells or bad smells, by whatever odour the mind may be distracted or attracted, withdraw the mind from it, and bring the *chitta* under the control of the soul (*ātman*).

From sweet or acid tastes, from bitter or astringent tastes, by whatever taste the mind may be attracted, withdraw it from that, and bring it within the control of the soul (*ātman*).

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 4:1–5; cf. GSV p.36

Swamis Vivekananda and Shivananda summarize:

He who has succeeded in attaching his mind to the centres of perception at will, or in detaching it from them, has succeeded in *pratyāhāra*, which means ‘gathering towards’, checking the outgoing powers of the mind, freeing it from the thralldom of the senses. When we can do this we shall really possess character, then alone we shall have taken a long step towards freedom.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSVI pp.173–74

If you are well established in the practice of *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses), if you have the senses under your full control, you can find perfect solitude and peace even in the most crowded and noisy places of a big city. If the senses are turbulent, if you have not got the power to withdraw the senses, you will have no peace of mind even in a solitary cave in the Himalayas.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.150–51

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga, indriya-nigraha** (►4).

1. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 2:29.
2. E.g. *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 1:1; *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 1:1–3; *Varāha Upanishad* 5:11–12; *Yogatattva Upanishad* 68.
3. E.g. *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* 5–6; *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 41, 93; *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:35–40, *HSYB* pp.20–23; see also *Ātmā Upanishad* 1:4.
4. *Maitrī Upanishad* 6:18.
5. *Maitrī Upanishad* 6:25.
6. Cf. *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 93.

7. *Darshana Upanishad* 7:1–14; cf. *Goraksha Paddhati* 2:24; *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 6:1–9, *HSYB* p.179.
8. *Trishikhi-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 2:30, 130.
9. *Vasishṭha Saṃhitā*, *Kumbhaka Paddhati*, in *HSYB* p.181.
10. E.g. *Goraksha Paddhati* 2:24; *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 6:1–9, *HSYB* p.179.

prayer An earnest petition, entreaty, or other communication addressed to a deity; any form of communion or communication, attempted or successful, with what is believed to be sacred or holy, such as a deity, supernatural powers, the spiritual realms, the supreme Being, or any object of worship; a practice common to all religions, of all times and places. Prayer can be communal or personal, spoken or silent, verbal or in a still mind. It can be spontaneous, ritualistic, or according to specific techniques designed to aid concentration and focus, and to develop a sense of communion with or emotional feeling for the Divine.

Despite the frequent hostility of one religion towards another, even in present times, prayer and meditation are practices of the mind and soul, and when the layer of belief and cultural differences is stripped away, the essential practice is the same. Just as sitting and walking are not a matter of race or religion, neither are prayer and meditation. Though they come in many forms, no religion is without them.

In the popular mind, prayer is normally perceived as verbal petitions to God – usually repeated orally, sometimes mentally. Although people may associate prayer with a particular religion, according to their cultural background, the feeling and experience that there are forces beyond their control is common to all people, at least at some point in their lives. There are naturally times, therefore, when a human being finds himself in prayer to whatever higher power he believes in, or even on the off-chance that such a power does exist and can hear him.

It is also clear that mystics, regardless of religious background, have understood the existence of a higher kind of prayer. It is commonly spoken of as interior prayer, the prayer of quiet, contemplative prayer, and so on. This kind of prayer is one in which the soul seeks inner communion and even union with God – a prayer in which the mind is stilled and does not repeat various verbal formulae. In this form, prayer is the same as spiritual practice or meditation, and there are many places in mystic literature where the term is evidently used with this meaning.

A number of Christian mystics have given their definitions of such prayer:

Prayer ... is a turning away from the world, visible and invisible.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28, LDAC p.277

In itself, prayer is nothing other than a devout intent directed towards God, for the getting of goodness and the removal of evil.

Cloud of Unknowing 39; cf. CU p.87, CUCW p.106, CUEU p.168

Prayer is the deliberate act of the soul. It is true, full of grace and lasting, for it is united with and fixed into the will of our Lord by the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love 41, RDL p.124

Prayer is nothing other than the ascent of the heart to God, and its withdrawal from all earthly thoughts.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 1:25, LPH p.29

With me, prayer is an uplifting of the heart; a glance towards heaven; a cry of gratitude and love, uttered equally in sorrow and in joy. In a word, it is something noble, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites it to God. Sometimes, when I am in such a state of spiritual dryness that not a single good thought occurs to me, I say very slowly the “Our Father” or the “Hail Mary”, and these prayers suffice to take me out of myself and wonderfully refresh me.

Thérèse of Lisieux, Story of a Soul 10, TLSS p.163

Prayer is an uplifting of our hearts to God, whereby we become united and made one with Him. To pray is for the soul to rise above itself, and above all created things, and to be joined with God and engulfed in that ocean of infinite sweetness and love. Prayer is the issuing of the soul to receive God when He comes in His abundant grace, and the soul draws Him to itself as to His kingdom, giving Him a dwelling place within itself as it were within a temple, and therein possessing, loving and having fruition of Him. Prayer is the standing of the soul in the presence of God, and of God in the presence of the soul. . . . (Prayer is) naught else but a disposition and preparation for grace. . . . (Prayer is) intimacy of man with God and a union of the spirit of man with God.

*Luis de Granada, Oración y Meditación 1:1, 3:1,
OFLG2 pp.11–12, 437, 439, in SSM1 p.34*

True prayer is nothing else than pure abandonment to Him, with perfect fidelity to trust Him in all that He is.

Hadewijch, Letters 31, HCW p.120

Prayer is an interview or conversation between the soul and God.

Gregory of Nyssa, in LGFS p.218

True prayer is the gift of God.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 8, OPJ p.66

Although prayer is not the cause for which our Lord gives grace, it is nevertheless the means by which grace, freely given, comes to the soul.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 1:24, LPH p.28

Undistracted prayer is the highest contemplative state (*noēsis*) of the soul (*nous*).

Evagrios Pontikos, On Prayer 35, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.60

Unremitting prayer is the death of despondency.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 26, LDAC p.256

Prayer is often wordless, the mind in an act of intuitive synthesis being aware of everything simultaneously. During such times, the soul hovers on that brink where a man may at any moment lose all sense of the world and of the body, where the mind ceases to think in separate concepts, and where the spirit will be sensible only of God. At such a moment, a man forgets the world. His supplications die away, and in rapt silence he simply dwells in God.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.33

Prayer requires full concentration on the Divine:

At prayer, if you are aware that you are praying, your attention has wandered; you have taken your mind away from God to let it rest upon what you are doing. Our biggest distraction, very often, is the care we take not to have any distractions! Simplicity is the best way in spiritual things. If you want to contemplate God – do that, and don't think of anything else. If you begin to look back on yourself, to examine your contemplation, you are no longer looking at God, but at your own behaviour, yourself. That man is praying fervently, who cannot tell whether he is praying or not; he is not concerned with what he is doing – all his thoughts are on God.

François de Sales, Love of God 9:10, LGFS p.381

If, while you are praying, your mind drags you towards another act to be performed after your prayer, you are not yet praying with singleness of purpose. Prayer is the inner vision that is illuminated by the Spirit, and that contemplates inwardly the good implanted in the heart. Prayer is the quietness that sings incessant glory in the language of the angels.

Simon of Taibutheh 194a; cf. WS7 p.58

In his highly influential, *Ladder of Ascent*, John Klimakos makes many definitive statements concerning prayer:

Prayer is by nature a dialogue and a union of man with God. Its effect is to hold the world together. It achieves a reconciliation with God. . . .

Make the effort to raise up, or rather, to wrap your thought within the words of your prayer; and if, like a child, it gets tired and falters, raise it up again. The mind, after all, is naturally unstable, but the God who can do everything can also give it firm endurance. Persevere in this, therefore, and do not grow weary. . . .

Prayer is tarnished when we stand before God, our minds seething with irrelevancies. It disappears when we are led off into useless cares. It is robbed when our thoughts stray without our realization of the fact. And it is defiled when we are in any way under attack. . . .

War reveals the love of a soldier for his king, and the time and practice of prayer reveals a monk's love for God. So your prayer shows where you stand. Indeed, theologians say that prayer is a monk's mirror. . . .

A man with a taste for prayer may defile his mind with one careless word, and then at prayer he will not get what he wants in the way he used to do. . . .

Always be brave, and God will teach you your prayer.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28; cf. LDAC pp.274, 276–81

Although Christian writers have written profusely on prayer, very little of what Jesus had to say on the subject is preserved in the gospels. He does indicate, however, that prayer should be practised in private:

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Matthew 6:5–6; cf. KJV

When prayers are conducted in public, there will generally be an awareness of one's neighbours, which leads on to the desire to impress others with one's holiness, and so on. Consequently, public prayer is often hollow, and the "reward" of such prayer is (at best) the respect of others. Jesus says that for prayer, solitude is best, so that one's devotion can be focused entirely on God. He sees everything, and knows everything, and His reward is to shower His grace freely.

Emphasizing the point that real prayer is silent communion with God rather than set prayers or “vain repetitions”, Jesus adds:

But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen (*ethnikoi*) do: for they think that they will be heard for their much speaking. Do not therefore be like them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:7–8; cf. KJV

There is no point, he says, in petitioning the Divine or putting a daily demand list before Him, either for personal needs, or for the perceived needs of others, or even for the world at large. God knows how best to run His creation, and He knows the individual needs of every soul. As Jesus is intimating, verbal prayer can soon become mechanical, devoid of a devotional feeling. Evagrius reminds his readers of Jesus’ advice:

The value of prayer lies not in mere quantity but in its quality. This is shown by the contrast of the two men who went up into the temple, and by the injunction: “When you pray, do not use vain repetitions.”

Evagrius Pontikos, On Prayer 151, Philokalia, PCT1 p.71

The “two men” refers to an example given by Jesus concerning a publican and a Pharisee who both go to the temple to pray. The Pharisee is self-righteous, and thanks God that he is better than others, such as the nearby publican (a tax collector, disliked and scorned by society and presented with ample opportunity for corruption). The publican simply begs God for forgiveness of his sins. Jesus deems the latter to be the holier of the two.¹

The highest devotion lies beyond verbal prayer. When mystics do suggest verbal prayers, as with the well-known prayer attributed to Jesus,² such prayers are not given as words to be repeated unthinkingly. They are meant to reflect the attitude that a person should adopt in life. Johann Tauler comments:

Outward prayer is of no profit except insofar as it stirs up the noble flame of devotion in the heart, and when that sweet incense breaks forth and rises up, then it matters little whether the prayer of the lips be uttered or not.

Johann Tauler, Sermons 5, HLT p.236

The gnostic writers of early Christian times expressed the same ideas. The writer of the pithy sayings found in the *Gospel of Philip* likens external prayers and rituals to a donkey turning a millstone:

An ass which turns a millstone did a hundred miles walking. When it was loosed, it found that it was still at the same place. There are men who make many journeys, but make no progress towards any destination. When evening came upon them, they saw neither city nor village, neither human artefact nor natural phenomenon, power nor angel. In vain have the wretches laboured.

Gospel of Philip 63, NHS20 pp.166–67

Jesus, too, in the *Gospel of Thomas*, comments on the ineffectiveness of prayers, ascetic practices, and even good deeds:

If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves,
and if you pray, you will be condemned,
and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits.

Gospel of Thomas 35:14, NHS20 pp.58–59

Such practices do not, of themselves, take a person nearer to God. Rather, by engendering ego and pride, and creating an illusion of going somewhere spiritually, they may prevent a person from following the right path. The author of the Nag Hammadi *Expository Treatise on the Soul* summarizes it succinctly:

It is therefore fitting to pray to the Father and to call on Him with all our soul – not externally with the lips but with the spirit, which is inward.

On the Soul 135, NHS21 pp.160–63

In the *Pistis Sophia*, Mary is certainly referring to a higher kind of prayer when she speaks of the soul

who has become negligent and has not prayed in the prayer that takes away the evil of the souls and purifies them.

Pistis Sophia 327:130; cf. PS pp.654–55, PSGG p.273

She means that no verbal or ritual prayer can remove the deep impression of sins.

Similarly, when Paul advises “pray without ceasing”,³ he cannot be referring to any external verbal prayer, but to an inward practice that maintains continuous contact with God. Ultimately, this means inner contact with the divine Word, which becomes a constant companion to which all feelings of worship and prayer are automatically directed. Hence, Paul advises in another letter, having just described the spiritual path as taking on the “whole armour of God”:⁴

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

Ephesians 6:17–18, KJV

The same idea is expressed in the New Testament letter attributed to Jude, one of the brothers of Jesus and the same as the Judas Thomas who is the central character in the *Acts of Thomas*:

But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God.

Jude 1:20–21; cf. KJV

The highest prayer, then, is “praying in the Holy Ghost”, which is the divine Word. It is mystic communion with this Power, the “Living Voice and divine Song”, to which a Manichaean writer refers as “this pure prayer”:

Blessed and praised be this mighty Power,
 the bright and beneficent god, the *Srōshahrāy* –
 House and covering for all souls,
 Road and Path for all beings of lights and redeemed souls –
 May he be blessed so that his splendour, full of life,
 may shine upon the path of the elect,
 and bring us peace, well-being, and confidence in all lands.
 May he protect us, bringing us wonderful joy;
 May he accept from us all this pure prayer,
 this Living Voice and divine Song.
 So may it be eternally!

Manichaean Hymns, MBB p.18ff.; cf. GSR p.135, ML pp.64–65

The mystic nature of prayer again becomes clear from the Mandaean texts. Here, the Word is described as the “great Jordan of the First Life (*i.e.* God)” and the “sublime Vine”. Every day, the soul offers her “prayer and praise” – her inner prayer – before it:

By the bank of the great Jordan of the First Life,
 a sublime Vine stands erect.
 Each and every day my prayer and praise rises before it.

Mandaean Prayer Book 156; cf. CPM p.134

In another poem, prayer is identified as “uttering words of radiance” and being “absorbed in thoughts of light”. It is a prayer arising from the “everlasting

abode”, from God, resulting in the “forgiveness of sins”, which is offered in the early morning “when we have arisen from our sleep”:

We have purified our hands in Truth and our lips in faith.
We have uttered words of radiance
and were absorbed in thoughts of light. . . .

Honour rests upon the *‘uthras* (pure souls) who sit in glory.
This is the prayer and praise which came to them from
the great place of light and the everlasting abode.
We praise Him with it when we have arisen from our sleep,
before any have spoken falsehood.
For any man who prays this prayer,
there will be forgiving of sins and transgressions
in the great place of light and in the everlasting abode.

Mandaean Prayer Book 115; cf. CPM pp.111–12

The prayer that accurately fits this description is inner communion with the divine Word, and the return to Him. In another text, it is made clear that the prayer that is acceptable to God is prayer to the “Name”, the Word or “Voice” of God. Such prayer is a matter of mystic communion:

To your Name, land of light
and to the great door of the house of Life
have I addressed my prayer and made submission,
and to that great . . . First Source of Glory. . . .
Wondrous is His Voice, and His Converse other-worldly.
He it is who accepts prayer and praise,
and takes it up to the great place of light
and to the everlasting abode.
He accepts my prayer and my praise. . . .

For every man who prays this prayer
there will be forgiving of sins.
To every Naṣōraean man who prays this prayer
and keeps to his devotions,
and repeats the names sincerely,
a guardian spirit of light will come
and will abide in his house. . . .

By means of this prayer I will seek, and find,
and speak, and be heard. . . .

I shall be without sin or trespass
in the great place of light and the everlasting abode.

Mandaean Prayer Book 169; cf. CPM pp.147–48

It is the great power of the Word “who accepts prayer and praise”. Only inner, spiritual communion with this power will take the soul “up to the great place of light”, to eternity. Every soul who is called to offer this kind of wordless, mystic prayer will be cleansed of all past sins. For them, “there will be forgiving of sins”. To every “Naṣōraean”, to every true seeker of the divine *Naṣirutha* (Truth), who is faithful to his interior prayer and “repeats the names sincerely” – a reference to the repetition of the names used to focus the wandering thoughts – to him a “guardian spirit of light” – the radiant form of the saviour – “will come” within and will “abide in his house”, the house of the body.

See also: **prayer without ceasing.**

1. *Luke* 18:10–14.
2. *Matthew* 6:9–13.
3. *1 Thessalonians* 5:17, *KJV*.
4. *Ephesians* 6:13, *KJV*.

prayer (Native North American) Generally speaking, Native American traditions believe in the all-pervading presence of a universal spirit that is manifested in all things, animate or inanimate. The secret of a successful life is therefore understood to hinge on an awareness of this spirit in everything.

In order to inculcate remembrance and an atmosphere of this basic truth, various rituals and ceremonies have been adopted, a common factor in them all being chanting and prayer. Well-known ceremonies include the sweat lodge (Lakota, *inipi*), sun dance (Lakota, *wiwanag wachipi*) and spirit calling (Lakota, *yuwipi*), which are often accompanied by the fragrance and smoke of burning sweetgrass, sage, cedar, tobacco and other plant materials, which are believed to convey the essence of the prayers to the gods. Prayer offerings are commonly associated with prayers. These may include various ritual items, such as semi-precious stones, prayer feathers, prayer arrows, and the prayersticks of the Pueblo Indians (*e.g.* the Hopi), the Apache, and the Navajo. The prayers themselves, often in the form of songs or chants, make frequent reference to a rich mythology, each tribal nation having its own blend of legends.

Prayers are offered to the spirits who are believed to administer the varied aspects of human existence, or to the Great Spirit, the one God of all. Everything is deemed to have a spirit and be worthy of receiving a prayer – the

spirits of the sun, the moon, the wind, and the four directions being among the most significant. Prayers may be offered for rain, an abundant harvest, protection from enemies, the blessing of an infant, good luck, healing, peace, understanding, spiritual help, or help for a family that is troubled by disharmony. They are offered before setting out on a journey or on a hunting expedition, in thanks for food, in general thanksgiving – in fact, under practically all circumstances. Rituals in themselves may be regarded as a prayer, as something sacred, such as religious dancing.

There are many prayers that honour and give thanks to the spirits of plants and animals that have died so that human beings may live. Even inanimate things are held in respect. The American anthropologist Nancy Bonvillain (*b.1945*) explains:

In many Native American cultures, people pay homage to animals by thanking the animals' spirit protectors. For example, among the Algonquian tribes of eastern and central Canada, killing a bear requires special rituals. The hunters address the dead bear's spirit with words generally used for kinspeople, dress the bear in ceremonial clothing, and erect a wooden pole nearby on which they hang the bear's skull and offerings of tobacco. After the bear is butchered, its bones are placed on a raised platform so that dogs and other scavengers will not disturb them.

The spirits of bears are believed to appreciate these signs of respect and respond to the honours by allowing more bears to be caught. As a man from one Algonquian tribe, the Saulteaux, explained:

The bears have a chief, and the orders of this chief must be obeyed. Sometimes he orders a bear to go to an Indian trap. When offerings or prayers are made to the chief of the bears, he sends more of his children to the Indians. If this were not done, the spirit of the bear would be offended and would report the circumstances to the chief of bears who would prevent the careless Indians from catching more.

... Native Americans show respect not only to animals but to trees, plants, and earth as well. A member of the Fox tribe, which formerly resided along the banks of the upper Mississippi River, explained:

We do not like to harm the trees. Whenever we can, we always make an offering of tobacco to the trees before we cut them down. We never waste the wood, but use all that we cut down. If we did not think of their feelings, and did not offer them tobacco

before cutting them down, all the other trees in the forest would weep, and that would make our hearts sad, too.

And when Papago women, who live in southern Arizona, dig up clay to make their pots, they offer a prayer of explanation: "I take only what I need. It is to cook for my children."

Nancy Bonvillian, Native American Religion, NARB pp.33–36

Everything is understood to be interrelated and associated with the Great Spirit; as the Lakota saying goes, "*mitakuye oyasin* (all my relatives)", meaning, in the spirit, 'We are all related.' Therefore, everything is worthy of care and respect.

The American anthropologist George Dorsey (1868–1931) describes a similar understanding among the Wichita of the Midwest. Prayers are offered to Mother Earth, to the wind god, and to the animals of the earth:

Next in power and in reverence is Mother Earth, who gives birth to everything, is mother of everything, who keeps everything, even her bosom for the people to walk upon. Prayers are offered to the earth before journeys: "As I start on this journey, and as I take this first step, carry me through to the end of my journey." She is also a great medicine chest, keeping upon her body various roots, *etc.*, used in healing: "We are children of the earth, and as we go on a journey it means that we are like children crawling upon our mother, and as we exist upon the earth we are kept alive by her breath, the wind, and at the end of our time we are put in the ground in 'the bosom of our mother'."

Prayers are also offered to the god of the wind, which is breath, and hence life. Especially in case of sickness, prayers are frequently offered to the wind god: "Now, good wind, I ask you to come and breathe on me, so that I may be healed and feel comfortable. I pray you, good wind, enter me, so I may breathe and be healed."

Finally, offerings and prayers are made to the animals, especially to those which are supposed to have magic power, and which are the special guardians of the medicine men. Thus, in the ceremony of the medicine men, after the novitiate has been placed in a trance, he usually holds speech with some fierce wild animal, who visits him and instructs him – should he prove brave and not become scared. Thus he obtains power which he uses in doctoring; and in his songs, sung during the medicine men's ceremony, he tells of his experience with the animal.

George Dorsey, Mythology of the Wichita, MWGD pp.19–20

The relating of creation stories to children is regarded as a prayer to the "gods and heroes which still exist":

Instruction concerning the time of creation and transformation is considered by all Wichita parents as conferring a lasting benefit upon their children. Hence it is their custom to invite to their lodge some man, generally of advanced years, who is known throughout his life to have been upright, kind and brave, to relate the deeds of the ancient heroes. Not only was the rehearsal of these tales looked upon as a form of worship, as a prayer to the gods and heroes which still exist, but by the relating of their acts the young men and women of the household were led to believe that they, too, might become great and good.

George Dorsey, Mythology of the Wichita, MWGD p.22

Prayers are also sung and chanted in order to generate spiritual and even supernatural power within oneself:

Many Native American religions teach that the cosmic energy of spirit power is released through prayers and songs. To the Navajos of Arizona and New Mexico, the voice itself is powerful since it is thought to be akin to wind, the strongest cosmic force. Among some Native American peoples of the Southwest, including the Hopis and Zunis, sacred words must be recited exactly as passed down through religious tradition. If a person omits anything or makes a mistake in the order of lines, the prayer or ritual will be ineffective. In other societies, spontaneous prayers and songs are seen as divinely inspired. Orpingalik (spiritual healer and poet), an Inuit man of the Canadian Arctic, told the Danish researcher (and arctic explorer) Knud Rasmussen (1879–1933) that songs are thoughts, sung out with the breath when people are moved by great forces and ordinary speech no longer suffices.

Nancy Bonvillian, Native American Religion, NARB pp.18–19

In a Navajo traditional creation story, the world in which people live is guarded by four spirits who dwell in the four cardinal directions. The world is seen as beautiful and harmonious, and the Navajo people try to live in full appreciation of that:

Dawn Man lies on the horizon from east to south; Horizontal Blue Man lies from south to west; Evening Twilight Woman lies from west to north; and Darkness Woman lies from north to east. Within this world guarded by deities, the people now live. They try to abide by principles of harmony in order to maintain happiness and peace. These ideals are expressed by the Navajo word *hozho*, which is usually translated into English as ‘beauty’ but has a meaning that is much more complex than the English word. *Hozho* means all that is good, favourable, desirable,

beautiful, pleasant, peaceful, and harmonious; in addition, the word refers both to these qualities and to the conditions in which they exist. Many Navajo prayers relate the people's desire for this type of beauty. For example, one prayer says:

In beauty may we dwell.
In beauty may we walk.
In beauty may our male kindred dwell.
In beauty may our female kindred dwell.
In beauty may it rain on us.
In beauty may our corn grow.
In beauty all around us may it rain.
In beauty may we walk.
The beauty is restored.

Nancy Bonvillain, Native American Religion, NARB p.22

It is evident, looking at the many Native American prayers, that they do not propound or seek to reinforce a conceptual or theological doctrine. Most are immediate in their impact, concerned with life as it is lived in the here and now, and the infusion of things and events with spiritual power. In many respects, prayer therefore becomes an attitude to life. No significant event passes without prayer, like the naming of a child, for example:

The naming of a child is often surrounded by actions and prayers intended to bring the child health and long life. For example, Tewa babies are named on the fourth day after birth in a ceremony performed by the infant's naming mother, one of the two midwives who assisted the mother during delivery. At dawn, the naming mother takes the child outside and lifts it toward the rising sun while her assistant makes circular motions with a small hand broom to sweep in blessings for the child. The naming mother announces the child's name and offers a prayer to the spirits:

Here is a child who has been given to us;
Let us bring him/her to manhood and womanhood.
You who are dawn youths and dawn maidens –
You who are winter spirits –
You who are summer spirits –
 we have brought out a child
 that you may bring to manhood and womanhood,
 that you may give long life.
Give him/her good fortune we ask of you.

Nancy Bonvillain, Native American Religion, NARB p.22

Prayer is also offered for inner peace. As the Lakota Sioux holy man, Black Elk (1863–1950) says at the beginning of his book *Sacred Pipe*:

This is my prayer that . . . peace may come to those peoples who can understand, an understanding which must be of the heart and not of the head alone. Then they will realize that we Indians know the one true God, and that we pray to Him continually.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP p.xx

Prayers are also offered in gratitude for and in order to enhance the possibility of experiencing powerful spiritual dreams and visions. True shamans or medicine men are essentially men of prayer. The author Steven McFadden (*b.1948*) quotes Brant Secunda, a Huichol Indian of western Mexico:

Even though some people forget or ignore it, Brant says, perhaps the most important shamanic practice is prayer. “People often equate shamanism with having wild visions, but learning how to make a prayer is just as important as receiving visions. The art of prayer is humility versus self-importance. We pray that we won’t forget that our life is sacred. Gratitude is a mainstay of the Huichol tradition. They say it takes nine years to learn how to pray. When your turn comes, you don’t even think about what you are going to say, you just let the spirit speak through you.

“One way of coping with the busyness of modern life is to make your life and work a prayer. The Huichol people make their farm work in the cornfields a prayer, and so we should make our work with machines or numbers or words a prayer. We don’t pray to God to do everything, though. That’s a crutch kind of thing. A prayer is an affirmation of life, it’s a good action toward life, it’s a wishful thought.”

Steven McFadden, Profiles in Wisdom, PWES pp.94–95

In short, the best kind of life is understood to be a life of prayer. The Lakota high ceremonial chief Noble Red Man (1902–1989) says:

I pray, pray, and pray before I go to bed. Every time I wake in the middle of the night I pray to God. I thank Him for the life He gives me. I ask Him for understanding. During the day there’s things I have to do. People come to me, they ask me to go out and talk. I do it when I can. Otherwise I like to stay home and study, pray, and clean my peace pipe.

Maybe some think I should be doing something else. But God knows I’m doing the right thing.

There’s only one time to pray, and that’s now. There’s no better time to pray than now. Now is the only time you need to pray. You can’t pray any other time than right now! . . .

Sometimes the supernatural power comes to help us. We can't control that power, but still it comes to help us when we need it. If you're open to God, if you're using your spiritual power, then God will use His supernatural power to help you.

It's the power that gives us eternal life.
It's the power that answers our prayers.
It's the Great Reality.

Sometimes I see beyond this world. I see a Great Reality. It's the Great Reality of God. You can't really describe it. There's no evil there. It's all good. There's no evil in God.

Noble Red Man, Lakota Wisdomkeeper Mathew King, NRMK pp.7, 27

See also: **paho** (8.4), **sacred pipe**, **sun dance**, **sweat lodge**, **yuwipi**.

prayer of Jesus (Gk. *Iēsou euchē*) The continuous repetition of a short prayer, such as “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me” or a variant thereon; a form of prayer developed in the early centuries of the Eastern Church, becoming the standard form of mental and contemplative prayer in the Orthodox Church; regarded not so much as a *mantra*, but as a prayer addressed to Jesus, expressing faith in Him as Son of God and saviour; often practised, especially in times past, with the attention focused on the breathing and on the heart; also called the Jesus prayer, *monologistos euchē* (single-phrased prayer), mental prayer, and ceaseless prayer.

The practice of the prayer of Jesus is known to have had an early origin, probably dating back to the desert fathers of the fifth century. Its first explicit mention appears in the writings of Neilos the Ascetic (*d.c.*430),¹ abbot of a monastery near Ankara, and possibly a disciple of John Chrysostom (*c.*345–407), Greek patriarch and archbishop of Constantinople (398–404). A variant of the prayer is mentioned by Diadochos of Photiki (*c.*400–486), who emphasizes constant remembrance of the name of Jesus,² recommending repetition of the words “Lord Jesus”.³ John Cassian (*c.*360–435), the first to introduce the rules of Eastern monasticism to the West (probably Provence, France), similarly recommends the repetition of a brief passage from the biblical *Psalms*.⁴

The first author to use the actual term ‘Jesus prayer (*Iēsou euchē*)’ was probably John Klimakos (*c.*579–649), who also seems to have been the first writer to have applied the adjective *monologistos* (single-phrased, single-worded) to prayer. In his *Ladder of Ascent*, he speaks of the *monologistos Iēsou euchē* (single-phrased prayer of Jesus). Let it become a constant companion, he counsels:

Let the remembrance of death and the single-phrased prayer of Jesus (*monologistos Iēsou euchē*) go to sleep with you and get up with you, for nothing helps you as these do when you are asleep.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 15; cf. LDAC p.178

It is uncertain whether John Klimakos is referring to the repetition of just the name of Jesus or to the short prayer, though there would have been little difference in the practice of either. Many later writers have recommended the specific use of the Jesus prayer, which became the traditional form of recollected and contemplative prayer in the Orthodox tradition. It is a primary theme of the writings gathered together in the *Philokalia*. In more recent times, the practice of the prayer has enjoyed a resurgence of interest, initiated perhaps by – or at least coinciding with – the nineteenth-century anonymous Russian publication *The Way of a Pilgrim*, which has become an inspirational classic, translated into many languages. In the twentieth century, largely due to the influence of this book, the Jesus prayer was adopted by many Christians of other Churches. The nature of the practice is explained in *The Way of a Pilgrim*:

The continuous interior prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart; while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep. The appeal is couched in these terms, “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.” One who accustoms himself to this appeal experiences as a result so deep a consolation and so great a need to offer the prayer always that he can no longer live without it, and it will continue to voice itself within him of its own accord.

Way of a Pilgrim, WPW pp.8–9

The essential purpose of the prayer is to focus the mind on God:

He who has consecrated himself to the true service of God must specially guard himself against letting his thoughts wander by the unceasing prayer of Jesus and must on no account allow himself to be mentally idle. Without paying any attention to the thoughts and images that make their appearance, he must constantly return to prayer by the name of Jesus as to a harbour or haven, believing that Jesus indefatigably takes care of that servant of his who keeps near him constantly by the unwearied remembrance of him.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 15, OPJ p.118

The prayer begins with oral or vocal repetition and proceeds naturally to mental repetition. When the mind wanders, which is its nature, it is to

be brought back again ... and again. The modern Orthodox Metropolitan Kallistos Ware explains:

The invocation of the Holy Name begins as oral or vocal prayer. But from the start, needless to say, we seek to concentrate our mind upon the meaning of the words that we pronounce. As St John Klimakos enjoins, "Enclose your thought in the words of the prayer."⁵ Thus the first level leads imperceptibly into the second.

At the second stage, prayer of the mind, we have to struggle constantly against wandering thoughts. But we are not to be discouraged by this inner fragmentation, for it is a universal experience and is, indeed, a consequence of our fallen state: "It is natural that a crowd of thoughts and images should arise within a fallen being. ... A total absence of distractions is the privilege of angels."⁶ Ignatius Brianchaninov does not claim to offer any quick and easy recipe against distractive thoughts. He simply urges us, through the faithful and persistent repetition of the Jesus prayer, constantly to recall our volatile attention to the awareness of Christ's presence. Each time the mind wanders, we are to bring it back firmly yet without inner anger – back to the centre, back to the one whom we are invoking, back to Jesus.

Kallistos Ware, Foreword, in OPJ pp.xxviii

Concerning this vocal and mental repetition, Gregory of Sinai observes:

Some fathers teach that the prayer should be said aloud; others, that it should be said silently with the mind (*nous*). On the basis of my personal experience, I recommend both ways. For at times the mind (*nous*) grows listless and cannot repeat the prayer, while at other times the same thing happens to the voice. Thus we should pray both vocally and in the mind (*nous*). But when we pray vocally, we should speak quietly and calmly and not loudly, so that the voice does not disturb and hinder the consciousness and concentration of the mind (*nous*). This is always the danger until the mind (*nous*) grows accustomed to its work, makes progress and receives power from the spirit to pray firmly and with complete attention. Then there will be no need to pray aloud – indeed, it will be impossible, for we shall be content to carry out the whole work with the mind (*nous*) alone.

Gregory of Sinai, On Prayer 2, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 pp.275–76

The third level of the prayer is when the attention descends into the heart, becoming prayer of the heart. By 'heart' is meant not only the bodily heart, but also the emotional, "moral and spiritual centre" of a human being, according to the understanding of the hesychasts (contemplative monks of the Orthodox Church):

The third degree of prayer is attained when not only does the mind or intellect recite the Jesus prayer with full attentiveness, but it also descends into the heart and is united with it. In this way, our invocation becomes prayer of the heart, or more exactly prayer of the mind in the heart.

When the hesychast tradition speaks of the ‘heart’ in this context, the word is to be understood in its full Hebraic sense, as found in scripture. It signifies, not merely the emotions and affections, but the moral and spiritual centre of the total human person, the ground and focal point of our created being, the deep self.

Prayer of the heart, then, is no longer prayer of one faculty alone, but prayer of the entire person, spirit, soul, and body together. It is precisely at this stage that prayer becomes not just something that we *do* but something that we *are* – something, moreover, that we *are* not just from time to time but continually. In this way, St Paul’s injunction becomes a realized fact: “Pray without ceasing.”⁷ Nor is this all. Since the heart is not only the centre of our created personhood but also the place where Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell within us, prayer of the heart is not so much something that *we* do as something that *God* does; not so much *my* prayer as the prayer of “Christ in me”.⁸

Kallistos Ware, Foreword, in OPI p.xxix

This degree of prayer is regarded as a divine gift, and with it comes the power to withstand all negative thoughts and feelings:

The transition from the second to the third level – from prayer of the mind to prayer of the heart – is crucial and decisive. Prayer of the heart is not simply the result of human effort, and still less is it the automatic consequence of any physical technique. It is, on the contrary, a gift from God, the free gift of His grace, conferred by Him on those whom He chooses, at the time He chooses. In the words of Ignatius, “With the union of the mind and heart, the ascetic receives the power to resist all passionate thoughts and passionate feelings. Can this be the result of any technique? No! It is the result of grace; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who overshadows the unseen labour of the Christian ascetic; and it is incomprehensible to carnal and natural men.”⁹

Kallistos Ware, Foreword, in OPI pp.xxix–xxx

In some traditions of Christian thought, the body is not a prison from which the soul must escape. It is understood to participate in the spiritual process. According to the belief, souls will even be reunited with their spiritualized physical bodies on the Day of Judgment. When Christ took on a human

body, it became sanctified by his presence. The rationale behind the prayer of the heart is to enter into full participation in such sanctification. Kallistos Ware explains:

The heart, it has been said, is the primary organ of man's being, the point of convergence between mind and matter, the centre alike of man's physical constitution and of his psychic and spiritual structure. Since the heart has this twofold aspect, at once visible and invisible, prayer of the heart is prayer of body as well as soul: only if it includes the body can it be truly prayer of the whole man. A human being, in the biblical view, is a psychosomatic totality – not a soul imprisoned in a body and seeking to escape, but an integral unity of the two. The body is not just an obstacle to be overcome, a lump of matter to be ignored, but it has a positive part to play in the spiritual life, and it is endowed with energies that can be harnessed for the work of prayer.

If this is true of prayer in general, it is true in a more specific way of the Jesus prayer, since this is an invocation addressed precisely to God Incarnate, to the Word made flesh. Christ at His Incarnation took not only a human mind and will but a human body, and so He has made the flesh into an inexhaustible source of sanctification. How can this flesh, which the God-man has made Spirit-bearing, participate in the invocation of the Name and in prayer of the mind in the heart?

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW p.33

In order to include the body in the spiritual process, the early hesychasts used a physical technique involving concentration upon the breathing:

To assist such participation and as an aid to concentration, the hesychasts evolved a 'physical technique'. Every psychic activity, they realized, has repercussions on the physical and bodily level; depending on our inward state, we grow hot or cold, we breathe faster or more slowly, the rhythm of our heartbeats quickens or decelerates, and so on. Conversely, each alteration in our physical condition reacts adversely or positively on our psychic activity. If, then, we can learn to control and regulate certain of our physical processes, this can be used to strengthen our inward concentration in prayer. Such is the basic principle of the hesychast 'method'.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.33–34

In practice, their technique had three main aspects: bodily posture, breath control, and inward concentration on the heart. These three are described by Kallistos Ware:

1. *External posture.* St Gregory of Sinai advises sitting on a low stool, about eight inches high; the head and shoulders should be bowed, and the eyes fixed on the place of the heart. He recognizes that this will prove exceedingly uncomfortable after a time. Some writers recommend a yet more exacting posture, with the head held between the knees, following the example of Elijah on Mount Carmel.
2. *Control of the breathing.* The breathing is to be made slower and at the same time co-ordinated with the rhythm of the prayer. Often the first part, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," is said while drawing in the breath, and the second part, "have mercy on me, a sinner," while breathing out. Other methods are possible. The recitation of the prayer may also be synchronized with the beating of the heart.
3. *Inward Exploration.* Just as the aspirant in yoga is taught to concentrate his thought in specific parts of his body, so the hesychast concentrates his thought in the cardiac centre. While inhaling through his nose and propelling his breath down into his lungs, he makes his mind 'descend' with the breath and he 'searches' inwardly for the place of the heart.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW p.34

The reference to the biblical prophet, Elijah, concerns an incident in which the prophet climbed to the top of Mount Carmel, where he crouched on the ground with his face between his knees.¹⁰ That Orthodox monks adopted this uncomfortable posture is attested by ancient illustrations.¹¹

The techniques of breath control, continues Kallistos Ware, are to be practised only under expert guidance and with a great deal of care. If no such qualified guide is available, it is better to practise the prayer without any conscious attempt to link it to the breathing or to the beating of the heart:

Exact instructions concerning this exercise are not committed to writing for fear they should be misunderstood; the details of the process are so delicate that the personal guidance of an experienced master is *indispensable*. The beginner who, in the absence of such guidance, attempts to search for the cardiac centre is in danger of directing his thought unawares into the area which lies immediately below the heart – into the abdomen, that is, and the entrails. The effect on his prayer is disastrous, for this lower region is the source of the carnal thoughts and sensations which pollute the mind and the heart.

For obvious reasons, the utmost discretion is necessary when interfering with instinctive bodily activities such as the drawing of

breath or the beating of the heart. Misuse of the physical technique can damage a man's health and disturb his mental equilibrium; hence the importance of a reliable master. If no such *staretz* is available, it is best for the beginner to restrict himself simply to the actual recitation of the Jesus prayer, without troubling at all about the rhythm of his breath or his heartbeats. More often than not he will find that, without any conscious effort on his part, the words of the invocation adapt themselves spontaneously to the movement of his breathing and his heart. If this does not in fact happen, there is no cause for alarm; let him continue quietly with the work of mental invocation.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.34–35

Over the ages, there has been some discussion among practitioners of the Jesus prayer concerning the use of these physical techniques. In general, they are regarded as helpful to some, but not essential for the full practice of the prayer, whose primary goal is the inner invocation of Jesus. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), who did much to defend the hesychast tradition before the more conservatively minded, believed the techniques to be theologically justifiable.¹² During the last century and a half, however, Orthodox writers have placed little emphasis on them. As Ignatius Brianchaninov counsels:

We advise our beloved brethren not to try to establish this technique within them, if it does not reveal itself of its own accord. Many wishing to learn it by experience have damaged their lungs and gained nothing. The essence of the matter consists in the union of the mind with the heart during prayer, and this is achieved by the grace of God in its own time, determined by God. The breathing technique is fully replaced by the unhurried enunciation of the prayer, by a short rest or pause at the end, each time it is said, by gentle and unhurried breathing, and by the enclosure of the mind in the words of the prayer. By means of these aids, we can easily attain to a certain degree of attention.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, Arena; cf. AOCM p.84, in PNW pp.35–36

In fact, Gregory Palamas describes control of the breathing as a natural consequence of inner concentration of the mind:

This control of the breathing may, indeed, be regarded as a spontaneous consequence of paying attention to the mind (*nous*); for the breath is always quietly inhaled and exhaled at moments of intense concentration, especially in the case of those who practise stillness both bodily and mentally.

Gregory Palamas, In Defence 7, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 p.337

The Eastern fathers have had much to say concerning the practice. The prayer, they say, is not to be repeated mechanically, but with faith and devotion:

The Jesus prayer is not some talisman. Its power comes from faith in the Lord, and from a deep union of the mind and heart with Him. . . . A mere repetition of the words does not signify anything.

Theophan the Recluse, in APOA p.99

The form of the prayer should be decided upon and not changed merely to provide the mind with some variety:

Some of the fathers advise us to say the whole prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy,” while others specify that we say it in two parts – “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy,” and then “Son of God, help me” – because this is easier, given the immaturity and feebleness of our mind (*nous*). . . . We must not out of laziness frequently change the words of the invocation, but only do this rarely, so as to ensure continuity.

Gregory of Sinai, On Prayer 2, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 pp.275–76

Though the efficacy of the Jesus prayer is not doubted by its sincere practitioners, others may question how the mere repetition of a prayer can result in spiritual progress:

Many people are incapable of believing that a mere repetition, even of a prayer, can lead to any spiritual result. “Why,” they say, “should a kind of mumbo-jumbo awake the inner psyche of man?” This point can be argued from several angles, using different vocabularies, depending on the particular prejudices and points of view of the individual.

Put into non-theological language, it may well be that the Jesus prayer acts as a constant reminder to make man look inwards at all times, to become aware of his fleeting thoughts, sudden emotions and even movements, so that it may make him try to control them. This self-study and these attempts at self-control lead to an inner friction and man grows in spirituality through that ‘internal warmth’ mentioned by the fathers in the *Philokalia*.

Alexander d’Agapeyeff, Introduction, in OPIA pp.10–11

Internal focus upon and repetition of any prayer or *mantra* develops inner concentration and one-pointedness. At the same time, it reveals the contents of the mind, positive and negative. Previously dormant impulses may also be awakened, again both positive and negative. Through self-awareness and purification, the mind is thus cleansed of its hidden tendencies, leading the

soul deeper within on the journey to the Divine, permitting the essential divinity of the soul to come to the fore:

The remembrance of the name of Jesus rouses the enemy to battle. For a soul that forces itself to pray the prayer of Jesus can find anything by this prayer, both good and evil. First it can see evil in the recesses of its own heart, and afterwards good. This prayer can stir the snake to action, and this prayer can lay it low. This prayer can expose the sin that is living in us, and this prayer can eradicate it. This prayer can stir up in the heart all the power of the enemy, and this prayer can conquer it and gradually root it out. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it descends into the depths of the heart, will subdue the snake which controls its pastures, and will save and revive the soul. Continue constantly in the name of the Lord Jesus that the heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord the heart, and that these two may be one. However, this is not accomplished in a single day, nor in two days, but requires many years and much time. Much time and labour are needed in order to expel the enemy and instate Christ.

John Chrysostom, Letter to Monks, PG60 p.753; cf. in OPI p.22

There is some debate among the fathers as to the relationship of the heart to the mental faculties. On the one hand, as Gregory of Palamas observes, it is not to be thought that the mental faculties are actually located in the physical heart, “as in a container”:¹³ On the other hand, Gregory also quotes Makarios of Egypt, who maintains:

The heart rules over the whole human organism, and when grace takes possession of the pastures of the heart, it reigns over all a man’s thoughts and members. For the soul (*nous*) and all the thoughts of the mind (*logismoi tēs psychēs*) are located there.

Macarian Homilies 2:15.20, SHMG p.139; cf. FSHM p.116, in PCT4 p.334

Whatever descriptions, advice and instructions may be given regarding the prayer of Jesus, nothing is a substitute for actual practice. The experience and results, however, will vary from individual to individual. For some, the practice may be initially uninspiring, only later giving way to spiritual experience:

At first the practice of the prayer of Jesus appears to be extraordinarily dry and seems to promise no fruit. As the mind strives to unite with the heart, it meets at first with impenetrable darkness and gloom, hardness and deadness of the heart, which is not quickly aroused to sympathy with the mind. This should not cause despondency and cowardice.... The patient and diligent worker will not fail to be satisfied

and consoled; he will rejoice at an infinite abundance of spiritual fruits such as he can form no conception of in his carnal and natural state.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 3, OPJ p.26

For others, the prayer may come easily. The anonymous author of *The Way of a Pilgrim* relates how, having heard in church St Paul's injunction, "pray without ceasing", he sets about trying to find someone who can explain the meaning to him. After various encounters, he meets an old monk on the road who becomes his *staretz* – his spiritual guide or master. Following this meeting, the pilgrim describes how he "felt a glowing eagerness to take all the pains I could to learn unceasing interior prayer".¹⁴ Following further instruction, he describes his early experiences after being charged by his *staretz* to repeat the prayer six thousand times a day, using a rosary to count the repetitions. To begin with, he repeats the prayer silently or semi-audibly with the lips:

In my lonely hut I said the prayer of Jesus six thousand times a day for a whole week. I felt no anxiety. Taking no notice of any other thoughts, however much they assailed me, I had but one object, *i.e.* to carry out my *staretz*' bidding exactly. And what happened? I grew so used to my prayer that when I stopped for a single moment, I felt, so to speak, as though something were missing, as though I had lost something. The very moment I started the prayer again, it went on easily and joyously. If I met anyone, I had no wish to talk to him. All I wanted was to be alone and to say my prayer, so used to it had I become in a week.

My *staretz* had not seen me for ten days. On the eleventh day he came to see me himself, and I told him how things were going. He listened and said, "Now you have got used to the prayer. See that you preserve the habit and strengthen it. Waste no time, therefore, but make up your mind by God's help from today to say the prayer of Jesus twelve thousand times a day. Remain in your solitude, get up early, go to bed late, and come and ask advice of me every fortnight."

I did as he bade me. The first day I scarcely succeeded in finishing my task of saying twelve thousand prayers by late evening. The second day I did it easily and contentedly. To begin with, this ceaseless saying of the prayer brought a certain amount of weariness, my tongue felt numbed, I had a stiff sort of feeling in my jaws, I had a feeling at first pleasant but afterwards slightly painful in the roof of my mouth. The thumb of my left hand, with which I counted my beads, hurt a little. I felt a slight inflammation in the whole of that wrist, and even up to the elbow, which was not unpleasant. Moreover, all this aroused me, as it were, and urged me on to frequent saying of the prayer. For five days, I did my set number of twelve thousand prayers, and as I formed the habit I found at the same time pleasure and satisfaction in it.

Early one morning, the prayer woke me up as it were; I started to say my usual morning prayers, but my tongue refused to say them easily or exactly. My whole desire was fixed upon one thing only – to say the prayer of Jesus, and as soon as I went on with it I was filled with joy and relief. It was as though my lips and my tongue pronounced the words entirely of themselves without any urging from me. I spent the whole day in a state of the greatest contentment; I felt as though I was cut off from everything else. I lived as though in another world, and I easily finished my twelve thousand prayers by the early evening. I felt very much like still going on with them, but I did not dare to go beyond the number my *staretz* had set me. Every day following, I went on in the same way with my calling on the Name of Jesus Christ, and that with great readiness and liking. Then I went to see my *staretz* and told him everything frankly and in detail.

Way of a Pilgrim, WPW pp.13–15

His *staretz* then advises him to be thankful for such blessings, and gives him permission to repeat the prayer as many times as he wishes, and as often as he can. His *staretz* had also taught him the technique of repeating the prayer in the heart, and the unknown pilgrim adds:

After no great lapse of time I had the feeling that the prayer had, so to speak, by its own action passed from my lips to my heart. . . . I gave up saying the prayer with my lips. I simply listened carefully to what my heart was saying. It seemed as though my eyes looked right down into it (my heart).

Way of a Pilgrim, WPW pp.19–20

There is a significant difference between the use of the prayer throughout the day and its specific use at the time set aside for complete dedication to the practice. Kallistos Ware, speaking of oral and mental repetition, explains:

Two ways of using the prayer can be distinguished, the ‘free’ and the ‘formal’. By the ‘free’ use is meant the recitation of the prayer as we are engaged in our usual activities throughout the day. It may be said, once or many times, in the scattered moments which otherwise would be spiritually wasted: when occupied with some familiar and semi-automatic task, such as dressing, washing up, mending socks, or digging in the garden; when walking or driving, when waiting in a bus queue or a traffic jam; in a moment of quiet before some especially painful or difficult interview; when unable to sleep or before we have gained full consciousness on waking. Part of the distinctive value of the Jesus prayer lies precisely in the fact that, because of its radical

simplicity, it can be prayed in conditions of distraction when more complex forms of prayer are impossible. It is especially helpful in moments of tension and grave anxiety.

This ‘free’ use of the Jesus prayer enables us to bridge the gap between our explicit ‘times of prayer’ – whether at church services or alone in our own room – and the normal activities of daily life. “Pray without ceasing,”¹⁵ St Paul insists, but how is this possible, since we have many other things to do as well? Bishop Theophan indicates the true method in his maxim, “The hands at work, the mind and heart with God.”¹⁶ The Jesus prayer, becoming by frequent repetition almost habitual and unconscious, helps us to stand in the presence of God wherever we are – not only in the sanctuary or in solitude, but in the kitchen, on the factory floor, in the office. So we become like Brother Lawrence, who ‘was more united with God during his ordinary activities than in religious exercises’. ‘It is a great delusion,’ he remarked, ‘to imagine that prayer time should be different from any other, for we are equally bound to be united to God by work at work time as by prayer at prayer time.’¹⁷

This ‘free’ recitation of the Jesus prayer is complemented and strengthened by the ‘formal’ use. In this second case, we concentrate our whole attention on the saying of the prayer, to the exclusion of all external activity. The invocation forms part of the specific ‘prayer time’ that we set aside for God each day. Normally, along with the Jesus prayer, we shall also use in our ‘set’ time other forms of prayer taken from the liturgical books, together with psalm and scripture readings, intercession, and the like. A few may feel called to an almost exclusive concentration upon the Jesus prayer, but this does not happen with most. Indeed, many prefer simply to employ the prayer in the ‘free’ manner without using it ‘formally’ in their ‘set’ time of prayer; and there is nothing disquieting or incorrect about this. The ‘free’ use may certainly exist without the ‘formal’.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.14–15

Kallistos Ware goes on to discuss the postures that can be adopted during the ‘formal’ repetition:

In the ‘formal’ usage, as in the ‘free’, there are no rigid rules, but variety and flexibility. No particular posture is essential. In Orthodox practice, the prayer is most usually recited when seated, but it may also be said standing or kneeling – and even, in cases of bodily weakness and physical exhaustion, when lying down. It is normally recited in complete darkness or with the eyes closed, not with open eyes before an icon illuminated by candles or a votive lamp. Staretz Silouan of

Mount Athos (1866–1938), when saying the prayer, used to stow his clock away in a cupboard so as not to hear it ticking, and then pull his thick woollen monastic cap over his eyes and ears.¹⁸

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.15–16

The Jesus prayer, he observes, takes the nature of the mind into account. It is a simple and practical way of turning the mind to the Divine:

The Jesus prayer, then, is a way of turning aside and looking elsewhere. Thoughts and images inevitably occur to us during prayer. We cannot stop their flow by a simple exertion of our will. It is of little or no value to say to ourselves, “Stop thinking;” we might as well say, “Stop breathing.” “The rational mind cannot rest idle,” says St Mark the Monk;¹⁹ thoughts keep filling it with ceaseless chatter. But while it lies beyond our power to make this chatter suddenly disappear, what we can do is to detach ourselves from it by ‘binding’ our ever-active mind ‘with one thought, or the thought of One only’ – the name of Jesus. In the words of St Diadochos (fifth century), “When we have blocked all the outlets of the mind by means of the remembrance of God, then it requires of us at all costs some task which will satisfy its need of activity. Let us give it, then, as its sole activity, the invocation, ‘Lord Jesus. . . .’”²⁰

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.24–25

The invocation of the Name is in this way joyful rather than penitential, world-affirming rather than world-denying. To some, hearing about the Jesus prayer for the first time, it may appear that to sit alone in the darkness with eyes closed, constantly repeating “... have mercy on me,” is a gloomy and despondent way of praying. And they may also be tempted to regard it as self-centred and escapist, introverted, an evasion of responsibility to the human community at large. But this would be a grave misunderstanding. For those who have actually made the way of the Name their own, it turns out to be not sombre and oppressive but a source of liberation and healing.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW p.41

See also: **monologistos euchē, prayer of the heart.**

1. Neilos the Ascetic, *Letters* 2:140, 214, 3:273, 278, *PG*79 cols.260a, 261d, 312c, 520c, 521b–c.
2. Diadochos of Photiki, *On Spiritual Knowledge* 31–32, 85, 88, 97, *Philokalia, PCTI* pp.261–62, 285, 287, 293–94.
3. Diadochos of Photiki, *On Spiritual Knowledge* 59, 61, *Philokalia, PCTI* pp.270–71.

4. John Cassian, *Conferences* 9:26, 10:13.
5. John Klimakos, *Ladder of Ascent* 28; cf. LDAC p.276.
6. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Conversation*, CBSD pp.101, 126, in *OPJ* pp.xxviii.
7. *1 Thessalonians* 5:17.
8. *Galatians* 2:20.
9. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Arena*; cf. AOCM p.85, in *OPJ* p.xxx.
10. *1 Kings* 18:42.
11. E.g. in *St Grégoire Palamas*, GPMO p.92.
12. Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 1:2.7, TDHHI p.86.
13. Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 1:2.3, in PCT4 p.193.
14. *Way of a Pilgrim*, WPW p.11.
15. *1 Thessalonians* 5:17, KJV.
16. Theophan the Recluse, in *The Art of Prayer*, APOA p.92.
17. *Practice of the Presence of God*, PPGA pp.13, 16.
18. Archimandrite Sophrony, *The Undistorted Image*, UISS pp.40–41.
19. *On Penitence* 11, PG65 col.981b (emended).
20. Diadochos of Photiki, *Œuvres spirituelles*, OSDE p.119.

prayer of the heart An advanced stage of the prayer of Jesus, as practised in the Orthodox Church; the third stage, following on from vocal prayer and mental prayer; also called prayer of the mind in the heart.

The Romanian Orthodox Christian priest, theologian and professor Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993) maintains that both heart and mind have a part to play:

Pure prayer is concerned with the reuniting of the mind (*nous*) and the heart. Neither mind nor heart can be allowed to remain alone. Prayer that comes only from the mind is cold; prayer that comes only from the heart is sentimental and ignorant of all that God has given us, is giving us now and will give us in Christ.

Dumitru Stăniloae, Prayer and Holiness 2, PHI p.8

In this context, the heart refers not just to the physical heart, but to the spiritual centre of a human being, to the image of God, the deepest and truest self, in which the union of the human with the Divine is experienced. According to Orthodox understanding, prayer of the heart is understood to encompass the entire person, including the emotions, feelings, and body. Kallistos Ware explains:

‘Heart’ in this context is to be understood in the Semitic and biblical rather than the modern sense, as signifying not just the emotions and affections, but the totality of the human person. The heart is the primary organ of man’s being, the innermost man. . . . According to

B. Vysheslavtev, it is “the centre not only of consciousness but of the unconscious, not only of the soul but of the spirit, not only of the spirit but of the body, not only of the comprehensible but of the incomprehensible; in one word, it is the absolute centre”.¹ Interpreted in this way, the heart is far more than a material organ in the body; the physical heart is an outward symbol of the boundless spiritual potentialities of the human creature, made in the image and likeness of God.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.29–30

According to this understanding, the body is not a prison from which the soul must escape; the body participates in the spiritual process. Kallistos Ware continues:

To accomplish the journey inwards and to attain true prayer, it is necessary to enter into this ‘absolute centre’; that is, to descend from the mind into the heart. More exactly, we are called to descend not from but *with* the mind. The aim is not just ‘prayer of the heart’, but ‘prayer of the mind in the heart’, for our conscious forms of understanding, including our reason, are a gift from God and are to be used in His service, not rejected. This ‘union of the mind with the heart’ signifies the reintegration of man’s fallen and fragmented nature, his restoration to original wholeness. Prayer of the heart is a return to paradise, a reversal of the fall.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW p.30

True prayer of the heart is also a “self-acting prayer” where individual effort and exercise of will comes to an end, and ‘God prays in us’:

Those who, however imperfectly, have achieved some measure of ‘prayer of the heart’, have begun to make the transition ... from ‘strenuous’ to ‘self-acting’ prayer, from the prayer which I say to the prayer which ‘says itself’ or, rather, which Christ says in me.... Prayer of the heart, then, designates the point where ‘my’ action, ‘my’ prayer, becomes explicitly identified with the continuous action of Another in me.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW pp.30–31

It is a discovery of the innermost depths of the spiritual heart:

The ascetic learns the great mysteries of the spirit through pure mental prayer. He descends into his inmost heart, into his natural heart first, and thence into those depths that are no longer of the flesh. He thus finds his *deep* heart – reaches the profound spiritual, metaphysical core of his being....

Pure prayer draws the mind into the innermost depths of the heart and there gathers the whole man, even his body, into one. With the mind thus submerged in the heart, all earthly images are set aside and the soul, straining towards God in inner prayer, in the light proceeding from God, sees herself after a quite particular fashion. She sees, not external phenomena or circumstances, but herself stripped bare, her profundities unveiled.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA pp.31, 59

To accomplish this requires complete inner stillness and silence:

The main object of the monk is to achieve the stillness of prayer in the heart, with the mind, free from reflections, keeping quiet watch like a sentry to make sure that nothing enters into the heart from without. Where this state of sacred silence exists, heart and mind feed on the Name of Christ and his commandments. They live as one, controlling all happenings within, not by logical investigation but intuitively, by a specific spiritual sense. So soon as the mind unites with the heart, it can see every movement in the sphere of the subconscious.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA pp.76–77

This degree of control over the thoughts is not easy; yet it is the source of abundant blessings:

The prayer of the heart is the source of all blessings. It waters the soul like gardens. . . . This activity, which consists in the watching of the mind in the heart, outside all thoughts, is extremely difficult for those who have not been trained to it. It is difficult not only for beginners, but even for those who have laboured long but who have not yet received or retained within the heart the sweetness of prayer from the action of grace. It is well known from experience that for the weak this work seems very wearisome and hard. But when one obtains grace, then he prays without difficulty and with love, being comforted by grace. When the effect of prayer comes, then it draws the mind to itself, fills it with joy and delivers it from distraction.

Nil Sorsky, Monastic Rule 2, in OPI pp.78–79; cf. NSCW p.56

See also: **prayer of Jesus.**

1. B. Vysheslavtev, in *SADZ* p.22.

prayer without ceasing See **ceaseless prayer.**

presence of God (practice of) Techniques or practices intended to increase awareness of the divine presence; the practice of inculcating a constant awareness of the divine presence.

François de Sales (1567–1622) writes that the first step in the practice of mental prayer is to be in the presence of God, a step that can, he suggests, be achieved in four ways. The first is to realize the divine omnipresence:

The first way is to realize more vividly the omnipresence of God, in other words, the fact that God is everywhere and in everything, that nowhere and in nothing in this world may He not be found. Just as the birds, wherever they fly, always encounter the air, so we, wherever we go or wherever we are, find God present. Everyone knows this, but few give it much thought.

Blind men, when told that they are in the presence of a prince, behave with respect, even though they cannot see him. Yet for that very reason they easily forget his presence, and so more easily lose their respect and reverence. Our trouble is . . . that though we know by our faith that God is present, we do not see Him with our eyes, and so we often forget and behave as though He were not there. To know that God is present everywhere and never to think about it, comes to the same thing as if we did not know at all.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:2, IDL p.54

The second way is to understand that God is within the soul:

The second way of placing yourself in God's presence is to realize that He is not only present in the place where you are, but also in a very special way, in the depths of your soul, which He enlightens and sanctifies by His presence, since He is, as it were, the heart of your heart, the soul of your soul.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:2, IDL p.54

The remaining two methods relate to his Christian belief. The third, he suggests, is to think of Jesus looking down at Christians, especially when they are in prayer; and the fourth is to think of Jesus as being very close in all daily activities, in the same way as one might think of a friend, and imagine doing things with them.¹ Using any of these methods, he counsels, effectively, "Remember God's presence as often as you can during the day," and before starting prayer.

As a popular practice, remembrance of the divine presence owes much to *The Practice of the Presence of God*, a book comprised partly of letters by, and partly of reported conversations with, Brother Lawrence (1614–1691), a lay brother who served at a Carmelite monastery in Paris. Brother Lawrence

made awareness of the presence of God his primary business in life. He recalls that when he first entered the religious life, he would occupy the set time for prayers with various devotional and religious thoughts, while during the remainder of the day, he did his best to be aware of the presence of God. Slowly, however, he substituted all forms of private prayer with the simple awareness of the presence of God, which continued whether he was in his prayers or about his daily affairs. He writes:

For the first years, I commonly employed myself during the time set apart for devotion, with thoughts of death, judgment, hell, heaven, and my sins. Thus I continued some years applying my mind carefully the rest of the day, and even in the midst of my business, to the presence of God, whom I considered to be always with me, often to be in me. At length I came insensibly to do the same thing during my set time of prayer, which caused in me great delight and consolation.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 2; cf. PPGL pp.29–30

And again:

I have ceased all forms of devotion and set prayers but those to which my state obliges me; and I make it my business only to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention, and a general fond regard for God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, a habitual, silent and secret conversation of the soul with God, which often causes in me joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, so great that I am forced to use means to moderate them, and prevent their appearance to others.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 2; cf. PPGL p.31

Brother Lawrence studied many methods of prayer, but found that they only confused him. Therefore, he resorted to the simple practice of the presence of God:

Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and various practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God's.

This made me resolve to give my all for the All. So after having given myself wholly to God, to make all the atonement I could for my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his

judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my Father, as my God. I worshipped Him as often as I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence, and recalling it as often as I found that it had wandered from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind had involuntarily wandered. And I made this my business, as much throughout the day as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even at the height of my activities, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of God.

Such has been my common practice ever since I entered into religion; and though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have reaped great advantages from it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of God, because we can do nothing without Him; and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keeping ourselves in His holy presence and setting Him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him and doing anything that may displease Him, at least wilfully, but it also engenders in us a holy freedom, and if I may so speak, a familiarity with God by which we may ask, and that successfully, the graces that we stand in need of. In time, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of God is rendered natural to us, as it were. Give Him thanks, if you please, with me, for His great goodness towards me, which I can never sufficiently admire, for the many favours He has done to so miserable a sinner as I. May all things praise Him.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 1; cf. PPGL pp.27–28

In short, according to the record of a fellow religious:

His prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, his soul being at that time unaware of anything but divine love; and that when the appointed times of prayer were past, he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing Him with all his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy.

Practice of the Presence of God, Conversations 4; cf. PPGL p.19

Whenever Brother Lawrence had completed some task, he would check with himself how well he had remained in the divine presence. He was honest with his failings, but did not disturb his mind over them, returning once again with renewed effort to his practice:

When he had finished, he examined himself how he had discharged his duty; if he found well, he returned thanks to God; if otherwise, he

asked pardon; and without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the presence of God, as if he had never deviated from it. “Thus,” said he, “by rising after my falls and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God as it was at first to accustom myself to it.”

As Brother Lawrence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying; such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it, as could not but affect the beholders. And it was observed, that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. “The time of business,” said he, “does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”

Practice of the Presence of God, Conversations 4, PPGL pp.22–23

Writing of himself in the third person, he repeats:

You must know that his continual care has been, for more than forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with God; and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing that may displease Him; and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him, and because He deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that divine presence that he receives from it continual succour upon all occasions. For about thirty years, his soul has been filled with joys so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly.

If sometimes he is somewhat absent from that divine presence, God presently makes Himself felt in his soul, in order to recall him – something that generally happens when he is most engaged in his outward activities. And he answers with careful fidelity to these inward drawings, either by an elevation of his heart towards God, or by a meek and fond regard for Him, or by such words as love forms upon these occasions; as for instance, “My God, here I am all devoted to Thee: Lord, make me according to Thy heart.” And then it seems to him (as in effect he feels it) that this God of love, satisfied with such few words, reposes again, and rests in the depth and centre of his

soul. The experience of these things gives him such an assurance that God is always in the depth or bottom of his soul, that it renders him incapable of doubting it upon any account whatever.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 4; cf. PPGL pp.36–37

In the beginning, he says, the mind will wander off continuously, both in prayer and at all other times. For this, he recommends only bringing the mind back time and again to the awareness of the presence of God:

When the mind, for want of being sufficiently diminished by recollection at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us, even against our wills, to the things of the earth.

I believe one remedy for this is to confess our faults and to humble ourselves before God. I do not advise you to use a multiplicity of words in prayer; many words and long discourses being often the cause of wandering. Hold yourself in prayer before God. Like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate, let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord. If it sometimes wander, and withdraw itself from Him, do not trouble yourself on that account; trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to recollect it; the will must bring it back in tranquillity; if you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you.

One way to recollect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquillity, is not to let it wander too far at other times. You should keep it strictly in the presence of God; and being accustomed to think of Him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm at the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 8; cf. PPGL pp.45–46

There is no experience, he writes, to compare with this “continual conversation with God”. Having made it his moment-by-moment experience, he would like everyone else to share in his joy and love:

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Only those can comprehend it who practise and experience it. Yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive; it is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because God would have us do so.

Were I a preacher, I would preach the practice of the presence of God above all other things; and were I a director, I would advise all the world to do it, so necessary do I think it, and so easy too.

Ah! if we but knew the need we have of the grace and assistance of God, we would never lose sight of Him, no, not for a moment. Believe me; make immediately a holy and firm resolution never more wilfully to forget Him, and to spend the rest of your days in His sacred presence, deprived for the love of Him, if He thinks fit, of all consolations.

So go heartily about this work, and if you do it as you ought, be assured that you will soon find the effects of it.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 5; cf. PPGL pp.39–40

Indeed, Brother Lawrence cannot understand how those following a religious life can be satisfied with anything less than a sense of the divine presence. It causes no bodily fatigue, though it is advisable to forego pleasures that may distract the mind from its practice:

I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God. For my part, as much as I can, I keep myself secluded with Him in the depths of the centre of my soul; and while I am with Him in this way I fear nothing; but the least turning from Him is insupportable.

This exercise does not fatigue the body much. It is, however, proper to deprive it sometimes, nay often, of many little pleasures that are innocent and lawful. For God will not permit that a soul who desires to be devoted entirely to Him should take other pleasures than with Him; and that is more than reasonable.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 6, PPGL p.41

The twentieth-century Quaker Thomas Kelly, who was drawn into a similar practice by his own experiences of the divine presence, observes that the practice can be readily carried on throughout the day, whatever tasks may be to hand. There need be no outward show, only a diligent, inward awareness:

I should like to be mercilessly drastic in uncovering any sham pretence of being wholly devoted to the inner holy presence in singleness of love to God. But I must confess that it doesn't take time or complicate your programme. . . . One can have a very busy day, outwardly speaking, and yet be steadily in the holy presence. We do need a half-hour or an hour of quiet reading and relaxation; but I find that one can carry the recreating silences within oneself, well-nigh all the time. . . . Our real problem in failing to centre down, is not a lack of time; it is, I fear, in too many of us, lack of joyful, enthusiastic delight in Him, lack of deep, deep-drawing love directed toward Him at every hour of the day and night.

Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, TDK pp.96–97

Writing in the 1960s, Nancy Mayorga, who became a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda (himself a disciple of Ramakrishna), was also surprised by experiences of the presence of the Divine. She, too, found the experience so overwhelming that it became the primary focus of her life:

The whole purpose of life as I see it now is to practise the presence of God at every conscious moment. I used to think that such a state of mind or soul would be conferred suddenly when I succeeded in reaching *samādhi* or union. Now I realize that it is a habit that has to be trained into me, and that *samādhi* is not to be the cause of this perpetual enjoyment but the result and crowning achievement of it. By the time I have reached *samādhi*, I will have acquired the habit of the presence of God, and the moment of union will only set its seal upon the work accomplished.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM p.12

See also: **presence of God** (8.1).

1. François de Sales, *Devout Life* 2:2, IDL p.55.

pule (Hw) *Lit.* prayer, chant; in the native Hawaiian tradition, calling out to the gods to contact the *kahuna* (shaman) who would then resolve problems; a prayerful conversation with one's 'aumakua (guardian spirit, family ancestor deity).

A *pule* was offered to the gods or to the 'aumākua to ask for blessings or to cast a spell. Praying was an everyday affair with Hawaiians. They prayed for wind. They prayed for calm. They prayed for rain and then sunshine. When they were building a canoe, they would pray to do it correctly. If they were growing sweet potatoes, they would pray for a good crop. Waking in the morning, they would pray for a cheerful day, a fruitful day or a day filled with laughter and companionship. Everything was a prayer because they were connected with nature and the gods who oversaw creation. Even today, prayer gatherings are reported in the newspapers:

Standing in a tight circle, their arms around each other and *pā'ū* skirts forming a rainbow of colours, the ladies of the Honolulu-based *Hālau Nā Pualei O Likolehua* offered a *pule*, or prayer, on a recent Sunday as they prepared for the fifty-third Merrie Monarch Festival in Hilo.

They prayed for love, knowledge and unity, then lined up on the floor of the Saint Louis School gym to rehearse for the *hula* festival, which begins Thursday with the Miss Aloha Hula competition, followed by group *kahiko* (ancient-style *hula*) on Friday and group 'auana (modern style) on Saturday.

Nina Wu, Star Advertiser (March 27th 2016) p.1

As the modern author Charlotte Berney writes:

A belief in the power of prayer permeated the everyday life of the Hawaiians. A Hawaiian saying goes, “*O ka pule ka mea nui* (prayer is the most essential thing).”

Charlotte Berney, Fundamentals of Hawaiian Mysticism, FHMB p.32

When drought threatened crops, Hawaiians prayed to the deities *Kāne* or *Lono*. Among several identities, *Lono* was the “great god of fertile soil and fecund people, of healing and mercy”. Likewise, *Kāne*, among other things was the “god of creation, sunlight, and fresh water”.¹ In *Nānā I Ke Kumu* (‘Look to the Source’), Mary Kawena Pukui, a twentieth-century Hawaiian scholar, recorder and reviver of ancient Hawaiian culture, recalls that her mother used to chant:

Break through the heavens, break through the earth;
Break through the east, break through the west;
Break through the uplands, break through the lowlands;
Break through the waters of the ocean.
Let the waters of *Lono* fill to the brim.

There were prayers to calm the winds. Prayers for wind when a canoe was becalmed. Prayers to the gods to control what man could not. Prayers for help in both the emergencies and the routines of everyday life.

Such prayers were not always formal or memorized. Hawaiians also approached their gods with little ceremony. Because ranks of deities were not rigidly drawn, other spirits, some more human than godlike, were also addressed in what were often called prayers. “Help me! Forgive me!” and, to a mischievous spirit, “Stay away from me and leave me alone!” – all these requests and injunctions were part of the spontaneous prayers of everyday life.

Many spontaneous prayers followed verbal patterns set by long use. If a Hawaiian habitually spoke in allusion and euphemism, even his spur-of-the-moment prayers might employ verbal imagery. Many spontaneous prayers included phrases unconsciously memorized. Such as “*Lono* (or *Kāne*) of the long cloud, of the short cloud, of the dark cloud, of the light cloud,” and calling upon ‘*aumākua*’ “from the East, from the West, from the zenith to the horizon.” But even with such traditional phrases, the spontaneous prayer was very apt to be *kalokalo*, or ‘conversational’.

With little formality, the Hawaiian would ask forgiveness for taking from nature’s bounty. The bird catcher would speak to *Kū* in his

manifestation as god of *hulu* (feathers): “O *Kū-huluhulu*, forgive me for catching this bird and taking his feathers. They are needed for a *kīhei* (mantle) for my chief (named).”

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.134

Nānā I Ke Kumu says that nothing could happen or did happen without first saying a prayer to the gods:

Prayer as a part of Hawaiian life was only natural. For the gods were ever present, guarding, guiding, warning, blessing, punishing. Supernatural spirits inhabited, and even assumed, the form of plant and animal, rock and stream. They dwelt in calm sky and fathomless sea. They were visible in volcano flames. They whispered in the breezes; shouted in the thunder. Some of these spirits were distant and powerful *akua*, the impersonal gods. Some were ‘*aumākua*, family ancestors become gods. Some were *kupua*, demigods and godlike spirits. All, even unnamed spirits, were objects of prayer. For, one theory holds, these nebulous ‘nature spirits’ existed long years before the great gods, *Ka*, *Kāne*, *Lono*, and *Kanaloa* existed.

Therefore, what could be more natural than to pray to spirit, to ‘*aumakua*, to *akua*? To ask the help of *Lono* when crops were planted? For *Lono* was the deity of growing things. What could be more logical than to ask *Kāne* for clear water to drink? For *Kāne* governed stream and waterfall and even the drops that fell from the heavens. And what could be more fitting than to ask permission before taking fish from the sea? Forgiveness before stepping onto volcanic lava or digging in the earth? Thus, the Hawaiian from early childhood acquired the habit of praying.

The pantheon to be prayed to was complex. Not the least of the complexities came in the belief that a single god had a dual nature. *Uli*, for example, was both the fear-instilling goddess of sorcery as well as the hope-inspiring goddess of resuscitation and restored life and health. *Laka* was the benign goddess of *hula*, but she was also *Kapo*, goddess of poison and sorcery. *Kū*, the masculine principle, and *Hina*, the feminine, were individuals, yet both were parts of the *Kū* and *Hina* godhead. So where *Kū* was, there was also *Hina*.

The same god-spirit might even exist in multiple forms or functions. *Kū* and *Kāne* and *Lono* had scores of named personalities. *Kū-kā‘ili-moku* was the male warlike aspect of *Kū*. *Kū-ka-‘ō‘ō* (‘Top of the Digging Stick’) was the peaceful god of farmers. *Kū-moku-hāli‘i* (‘*Kū* the Island Spreader’) was *Kū*, the beneficent god of forests and canoe makers, as was *Kū-pulupulu-i-ka-nahele* (‘*Kū*, Kindling in the Forests’). Yet the supreme *Kū* godhead was *Kū-nui-ākea* (‘*Kū* of Wide Expanse’).

Lono, great god of fertile soil and fecund people, of healing and mercy, was also god of spear throwers that killed. *Kāne*, god of creation, sunlight, and fresh water; *Kāne*, the god to whom no human sacrifice was ever made, was also *Kāne i-kaulana-‘ula* who became a sorcery god and made poisonous the wood of certain trees. Only *Kanaloa*, constant companion of *Kāne*, had a single named identity and fewer, less contradictory aspects. As century merged into century, legends or regional retellings of legends extended, fused, or even contradicted the roles and characteristics of the gods. Heroes became gods or godlike; gods became inseparable from chiefs given the same name.

There was apparently a period when Hawaiians prayed in terror to an overwhelming, cruel god. Somewhere around the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, (the Tahitian Priest) Pā‘ao introduced the warlike, vengeful aspects of the god *Kū*. One theory holds that from these wrathful *Kū* gods came the wicked gods of sorcery. Before Pā‘ao’s arrival the gods were benign.

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 pp.121–22

David “Daddy” Bray (1889–1968), a practising *kahuna* (shaman), taught the use of chants and prayers as a form of meditation:

The method of meditation used in preparing the *kahuna*’s mind for addressing the ‘*aumākua* by prayer and chant was to first, relax the mind; second, free the mind of emotions and distractions; third, focus the mind upon the object of the prayer.

The chant derives its power from the cosmic forces. These appear as ‘*aumākua*. *Lono* is especially the ‘*aumākua* of sound as prayer and chant. He is the power of heaven and earth that vibrates in the *kahuna*’s heart, throat, and mouth as the prayer finds expression. The power that rises within the sincere person who has made himself worthy to address the ‘*aumākua* is the result of coming into harmony with the great forces of nature outside of man that are also present within him. The inner force is the same as the energy of nature. These forces are localized in the human body at certain key places. Part of the deeper practice of the *kahuna* is to release the power of the inner man. In the chant, these forces inside man act to raise the mind to the level of communication with the Divine. The mind focuses on the spiritual.

What is true prayer? Prayer must be sincere. If you are praying with doubt or pretence, then you will fail. The power will not be released. Prayer must be also spontaneous. As the *kahuna* meditates and prays, he is always sensitive to the feeling that he is being directed by the ‘*aumākua* beyond his little self. Prayer must not be an expression of just the little self. In prayer we reach beyond limited consciousness

to the infinite mind of God. We pass even beyond mind itself, to the great power of the universe.

Prayer is simple and childlike. Better than all the complicated prayers of ritual is the prayer of the sincere heart that states simply its feeling and need. The mind that is clear of the lowest negative force and has been refilled with the highest positive power, is direct like a child. Hawaiians believe that man is the child of the gods. Faith, trust, happiness and honest prayer is the real way to talk with the *‘aumākua*.

The traditional chant has definite words, and master *kāhuna* are taught to use special tones and gestures in chanting. But within the heart of the *kahuna* must be sincerity, spontaneity, sensitivity, lack of selfishness, harmony with the great power of nature, and childlike simplicity.

As the chants are practised, these virtues develop. The sounds of the chants act as a bridge between the *kahuna* and the *‘aumākua*. Often more takes place on a psychic and spiritual plane than is apparent on the physical. Sometimes the result of prayer and chanting only becomes apparent after a long time.

The main thing is to develop confidence and to continue to work without ceasing. Then the feeling of inner harmony with the great power of nature suddenly blossoms.

David Bray, Kahuna Class Notes, KCN p.6

An example of a *pule* taught by David “Daddy” Bray is a chant or prayer to *Kāne* for the blessing of a new home or building:

Arise O *Ku* (the architect and builder)!
 Arise O *Lono* (the *‘aumakua* of agriculture and sound)!
 Arise O *Kāne* (giver of life through the sun and living water of life)!

Hear my call:
Kāne of the thundering heaven;
Kāne of the tumultuous heaven;
Kāne of the steep precipices;
Kāne of the scattered earth;
Kāne who rides the sea;
Kāne who rides the winds of the upper regions;
Kāne who rides eternal in light and life;
Kāne who sees at all angles and from all angles –
 the four fiery eyes of lightning that peer through darkness of space.

Hear my call:
Kāne who inspires knowledge and life through the rising sun;

Kāne who inspires knowledge through the setting sun;
Kāne who controls the heaven above and the earth below.

Hear my call:
 Now all the forces of heaven above and earth below,
 contact, hear my call:
 Now possess me.

My ‘*aumakua* from beyond night eternal
 and from the spiritual forces above, positive!
 My ‘*aumakua* of the day earth
 and the spiritual forces of the earth, negative!
 Both male and female, hear my call and contact me:
 Now possess me.

May you lift all the restrictions and *kapu* (taboos) from this ground –
Kapu which may have been placed on it
 by those who have departed to the realm beyond –
Kapu which may have been placed in accordance
 with the laws and customs of the land of kings,
 prophets, and priests of old.
 May this ground (home or building)
 answer the purpose for which it is intended.

Daddy Bray, Kahuna Class Notes, KCN p.7

Mystical prayer born of ecstatic love for nature and the gods was also prevalent in old Hawaii. Many people speak of Hawaii as a paradise on earth, so it is easy to see how the inhabitants loved their gods in appreciation for the lives they had been given:

There is no doubt that the deeper forms of prayer were known and practised in ancient Hawaii. David Malo writes of the ecstatic love some experienced in prayer. There are Hawaiian words for meditation and contemplation. And there are *heiaus* (temples) which are known to have been used for meditative prayer. The use, during prayer, of ‘*awa*, a calming drink which produced pseudo-mystical effects – causing one to forget the cares of the world and to concentrate deeply on one thought – was a natural preparation for an introduction to mysticism.

The experience of mystic union is the same as the ‘oneness with the beloved’ that a person who is deeply in love enjoys when he is lifted into the rapture of ecstasy. In the ecstatic experience, the lover becomes oblivious of the world around him and oblivious of time.... He moves into another realm, another dimension, a different experience

of reality. Time and his ordinary world seem to exist separately from him. As he ascends the heights of ecstasy, he also loses consciousness even of his own individuality. Losing himself completely in love, and no longer aware of differentiations between himself and the rest of reality, he and his beloved become one. The same happens in the mystic experience: all separations fall away and the devotee becomes immersed in oneness, oneness with all being ... some say with divine being.

Michael Kioni Dudley, Man, Gods, and Nature, HNMG p.77

Another form of prayer or *pule* was ‘*oki* (remove). When people were anxious or fearful about what might happen to them, they would perform an ‘*oki* to the gods or their ‘*aumākua* to remove the fear:

‘*Oki*, in the old pre-Christian belief, was a way to avert or diminish harm, illness, or death that threatened. If one broke a *kapu* (taboo), or if warning of harm came in a dream, sincere prayer to the gods or ‘*aumākua* warded off the harm and relieved anxiety. Though the concept of ‘*oki* has been forgotten by many modern Hawaiians, the faith in anxiety-relieving prayer is great. In ‘*oki* and in other prayer-filled practices, the change from the *akua* (gods) to God, and sometimes the merging of beliefs, have not lessened Hawaiian faith in prayer.

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.8

Hawaiians of old did not readily embrace feelings of guilt. When the white missionaries came, many disagreed with the precepts of the Calvinists and steadfastly maintained that they were not “miserable sinners” at all. In 1830, Levi Chamberlain complained,

We find so little of that feeling of sinfulness and unworthiness which a correct knowledge of the human heart and a clear discovery of the character of God always produces.

Levi Chamberlain, in Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.136

When modern Hawaiians say, “*Epule kākou* (let us pray),” it is most likely that they are praying to two entities – the first being the Christian God and the second being their ‘*aumākua*. Prayers to the ‘*aumākua* could involve forgiveness for trespasses against nature:

One Hawaiian woman I know went to California to visit, and her hosts took her out to catch grunion. She got to the seashore and began praying. She prayed to the ‘*aumākua* of that area, and she told them she was a stranger there. She explained that she did not mean to trespass,

and asked forgiveness if she did. She prayed that the ‘*aumakua* there would let her catch fish in peace and safety. Then she went ahead and enjoyed herself.

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.138

Nānā I Ke Kumu summarizes the importance of *pule* or pray to the Hawaiians, maintaining that, even though their *pule* has been replaced with Christian prayer, much remains the same:

In such faith – and for far more than healing – do Hawaiians pray today. They pray in the name of Jesus Christ and the mighty Jehovah, and sometimes in the shadowy memory of the *akua*. The waters of *Kāne* may have flowed into the waters of the baptismal font. *Kū*, *Kāne* and *Lono* may have retired in favour of the Trinity. The ritual feast may have been supplanted by the religious fast. The *ho‘oponopono* (a ceremony to ease family tensions) may have been replaced by the Mormon Family Night. The rock of *Kāne* may have been exchanged for a statue of Buddha. An appeal to *Pele* may have been silenced; a “Hail Mary” voiced.

Yet, through whole or partial conversion to a new Deity, through successful or failing adaptation to a new culture, through the rushing changes of the jet age, the Hawaiian has continued to pray in the same wholehearted spirit of his ancestors. With deep devotion. With lively fervour. With constant trust in the power of prayer to ease the burden and enhance the beauty of daily life.

Co-author Pukui sums it up:

“Without *pule*,” she says, “Without prayer, I think my people would be lost.”

Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.143

Man was more than just an observer of the growth and fertility of nature. At every level of society in pre-Cook Hawaii, examples are found of observances which either limited man’s freedom of action or required him to put forth considerable effort in order to benefit nature. These practices were undertaken as ethical obligations – man doing his part in the communal relationship.

Besides labouring to cultivate his crops or to feed his fishing grounds, man had a spiritual role in causing nature to be productive. This activity could be as simple as prayer. Prayer, in ancient practice, was a deep, intense involvement with the deity. The Hawaiian prayed frequently. In every occupation there were private rituals which men performed. Samuel Kamakau (1815–1876), for instance, gives prayers the man said at every step of the cultivating process: prayers

for cutting and hewing his digging stick; prayers for preparing the area for planting; prayers while doing the planting; prayers for rain to come upon his young slips; prayers for the young plants to bear fruit; prayers for the fruit to grow big and healthy; and, finally, prayers for thanksgiving performed by harvest. Similar prayers and rituals were performed in other occupations.

Man's role in nurturing nature sometimes involved something much deeper than ordinary prayer – a spiritual or psychic extension beyond himself into unison with nature. This can be seen in rites which involve swallowing an eyeball of a fish. In the month of June, when the expeditions to fish for 'ōpelu (mackerel) returned, a fish from the first haul was brought to the king. Abraham Fornander (1812–1887) tells us, "The king then went to the shrine, where a priest prayed. They then prepared the king's fish, from which the king picked out the right eye and ate it."²

Michael Kioni Dudley, *Man, Gods, and Nature*, HNMG pp.97–98

See also: **'aumakua** (►1), **hula** (8.4), **kapu** (8.4), **prayer** (Native North American).

1. *Nānā I Ke Kumu*, NKK2 p.121.
2. E.S. Craighill Handy, *Polynesian Religion*, PRCH p.299.

pūrak(a) (S/H) Filling up; of uncertain etymology; inhalation of the breath; part of the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. See **prāṇāyāma**.

qìgōng (C) *Lit.* energy (*qì*) skill (*gōng*); skill or accomplishment in the manipulation of subtle life energy (*qì*); an integrated system of physical postures, deep-breathing exercises and meditation, with roots in ancient Chinese culture; rendered as *ch'i kung* or *chi gong* in older methods of romanization; closely related to *tàijíquán* (*t'ai chi chüan* or *tai chi chuan*). Nowadays, there are five major branches of *qìgōng* in China: Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, medical, and martial arts.

Daoist *qìgōng* is the earliest known form of *qìgōng*. It was developed by meditation adepts who identified subtle energy flows within the body and worked with them to attain the profound stillness required in spiritual practice. They also used this knowledge to develop a variety of postures and movements aimed at maintaining good health and curing illnesses.

Daoist *qìgōng* focuses on calming the heart and emptying the mind in order to develop stillness, softness, flexibility, and relaxation. Self-defence practices evolved from Daoist *qìgōng*, but were not its basis.

Buddhist *qìgōng* has its origins in the Indian *haṭha yoga* and *prāṇāyāma*, which arrived in China via two routes: firstly, the Shàolín Temple, which was the home of *Zen* Buddhism and Daoist *Gōngfū* (*Kung fu*); and secondly, the tantric traditions of Tibet, whence *qìgōng* spread to western China and then further east. Buddhist *qìgōng* and Daoist *qìgōng* each assimilated and modified practices from the other.

The three other types of *qìgōng* have adopted techniques from Daoist and Buddhist *qìgōng*, while focusing on specific functions and benefits. Confucian *qìgōng* focuses on developing mental and intellectual potential in order to mitigate stress resulting from intellectual endeavours; it incorporates techniques for energizing and calming the brain. Medical *qìgōng* seeks to mitigate chronic diseases and injury; it is used either as a primary therapy or in association with other forms of Traditional Chinese Medicine such as acupuncture, massage, and herbal remedies. Martial arts *qìgōng* focuses on attaining extraordinary physical and mental capabilities; its exercises lead to the attainment of an exceptionally energized body and mind, manifested in greater speed and power as well as superior reflexes and sensitivity.

See also: **dǎoyǐn**, **tàijíquán**.

qīngshè (C) *Lit.* quiet (*qīng*) hut (*shè*); a quiet cottage or shed; a room used for meditation; synonymous with *jìngshè*, *jìngshì*, and *xiánshì*. See **xiánshì**.

Quietism A Christian doctrine, deemed heretical, which maintained that God can be known through complete inner passivity, achieved through contemplation, to the extent that the individual ceases to exist, being replaced by the being of God, who is the sole, uncreated Reality. Everything is left to God, even spiritual effort together with concern for salvation and perfection, these being expressions of individual desire. Perfection is arrived at by complete inner submission to the divine will, relinquishing all human activity. The quietist does not practise humility, repentance, self-discipline, worship, thanksgiving, formal prayer, or Christian spiritual exercises such as meditation on the humanity of Jesus *etc.* Passive meditation or interior prayer, to the exclusion of all else is regarded as the way to union with God. By passive meditation is meant that no effort is made at interior recollection, in the belief that God will cause the soul to be recollected when He so wills.

Though having many fundamental elements in common with other contemplative movements, both Christian and otherwise, the doctrine is commonly identified with the Spanish priest and spiritual director Miguel de Molinos (1640–1696). According to his teaching, the contemplative must remain passive even in the face of temptation. In fact, Molinos taught that the

devil could enter the body of a contemplative and force him to act in sinful ways. These, however, were not sins, because the consent of the contemplative had not been given. In 1687, Molinos' doctrines were pronounced heretical by Pope Innocent XI, and Molinos spent the remainder of his life in prison.

A similar though milder movement was propagated in France by the mystic, Madame Guyon, supported by François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai, who developed a doctrine of pure love. They were both condemned in 1699 by Pope Innocent XII and recanted their beliefs.

Although Quietism is commonly associated with Molinos, his teachings were not so much an innovation as a definitive formulation of a Christian tradition or perspective that had existed for some time. Almost a century before Molinos, for instance, the Spanish monk and mystic, Jerónimo Gracián (1545–1614), in an *Apologia* “against certain people who equate the highest perfection in immediate unitive prayer with total annihilation of the soul”, lists twelve of their propositions, “in their very words, given to me in writing”, in order to refute them. These propositions begin with:

That the highest perfection and the perfect life of the soul consists in immediate union with Christ, when, without the mediation of any creature and with total annihilation of all interior and exterior acts, the soul with all its powers is united with Truth Uncreated, which is God. And that the soul should only make one petition and prayer to God – namely, that He will give it this union.

Jerónimo Gracián, Apologia contra algunos, OJG fol.211, in SSM2 p.146

The further propositions state that a number of practices are imperfect and should be abandoned. These include: vocal prayer, even the daily recitation of canonical prayer and praying for salvation; the repetition of the rosary of Our Lady (the Virgin Mary); masses in honour of the saints; “everything pertaining to the senses and the intellect”; service of Our Lady and the saints; pilgrimages; to gain ‘indulgences’; to do any good work with the hope of reward; and to make or venerate any images. An ‘indulgence’ is the remission of temporary punishment in purgatory for sin following absolution granted by a Catholic priest. The sale of such indulgences by licensed ‘pardoners’ was widespread in medieval times.¹

Although there must have been considerable difference in the interpretation and practice of individual ‘quietists’, the essential difference between Quietism and other contemplative movements is generally regarded as the absence of spiritual striving and struggle. It is upon this that critics from other contemplative disciplines within Christianity have focused, regarding Quietism as false mysticism and pseudo-contemplation. They have pointed out that it is simply impossible to relinquish human effort. As Antonio Panes (1621–1676) observes:

How sorely they are deceived who say that the best way to reach great heights of prayer is for the soul to abandon itself to the divine disposition, to suspend all its operations, and to await the working within it of grace. From this it follows that, by not applying its understanding to the knowledge of God or its will to love of Him, such a soul becomes idle and without the proper aptitude for being moved and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, since, for this effect, it is necessary that in some way the soul should be united with Him and made His instrument, which is accomplished through the act of turning and applying the faculties to the supreme Good.

And, although it is true that the soul which is in grace, through the real existence of God within it, is united with Him, yet such union suffices not for the acquisition, in the most perfect degree, of His divine friendship, or of any kind of merit unless the soul apply and dispose itself for Him to work in her. . . .

What greatly contributes to the deception of those who bring about in themselves this voluntary suspension is that, through having studied to withdraw themselves from outward things, they experience inwardly a nakedness and repose, free from every kind of image, and likewise a certain kind of enjoyment which any creature finds in quiet, because of the natural desire which it has for it. They judge that that sweetness is a result of their spirit being raised up in God, and so they persist in that useless idleness in which their nature itself rejoices. And from this results a great blindness, which prevents them from knowing the difference between natural and supernatural quiet.

Antonio Panes, Mystical Ladder 12, EMAP pp.81–83, in SSM3 pp.136–37

The dichotomy between surrender to the will of God and personal spiritual effort is a topic that has been discussed in probably all contemplative traditions, Christian and otherwise. It may be supposed that for as long as an individual has not attained union with God the sense of personal identity will inevitably remain, and personal struggle, even to remain passive, is unavoidable. Nevertheless, there is no reason to discount their experiences of the Divine as invalid, as writers such as Antonio Panes have done, merely because their beliefs do not conform to a particular doctrine.

See also: **quietude** (8.1).

1. Jerónimo Gracián, *Apologia contra algunos*, OJG fols.211–14; cf. in SSM2 p.147.

rāja yoga (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* royal (*rāja*) *yoga*; a name given to the traditional path of *yoga*, as outlined by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras*.

Very few details concerning the actual techniques of *yoga* are given by Patañjali, and neither the name *aṣṭāṅga yoga* or *rāja yoga*, by which his ‘system’ came to be known, appear in his *Sūtras*. In later literature, however, *rāja yoga* is regarded as the *yoga* of Patañjali, and refers to the practice of controlling the *prāṇa* within the *chakras* of the body (*i.e. prāṇāyāma*) and the ascent of the soul above the eyes until it merges in the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus. This awakening of the consciousness to the subtle *prāṇa* is the same as raising the *kuṇḍalinī*.

Yoga is an ancient practice, mentioned in many of India’s sacred texts. Having indicated that *yoga* involves control of the *prāṇa*,¹ the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* goes on to depict the ideal place for the practice of *yoga*:

In a level place, clean and free from pebbles, fire and dust,
free from damp and disturbing noises,
delightful to the mind and inoffensive to the eye,
secret and sheltered from the wind, one should practise *yoga*.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 2:10

But again, there are no details, for *yoga*, in all its forms, has always been a tradition of which the practical details have been handed down, not so much in literature, but from *guru* to disciple. When practised correctly, however, the techniques and goals of *yoga* are the same now as they always have been. Thus, the nineteenth-century Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), a disciple of Ramakrishna, describes the yogi’s ascent by awakening consciousness of the *prāṇa* in the central *nāḍī* (channel), running along the spine. It is the same technique as that which was used in ancient times:

The *yogī* alone has the *sushumṇā* open. When this *sushumṇā* current opens and begins to rise, we go beyond the senses, and our minds become supersensuous, superconscious – we go beyond even the intellect, where reason cannot reach. To open that *sushumṇā* is the primary objective of the *yogī*. According to him, along this *sushumṇā* are ranged these centres (*chakras*) or, in more figurative language, these lotuses, as they are called.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSVI p.169

In the extant yogic texts of the past, *rāja yoga* is commonly associated with *haṭha yoga* (*yoga* of physical discipline). The *āsanas*, *mudrās*, *bandhas* and *prāṇāyāma* practices of *haṭha yoga* are essential preparation for the awakening of consciousness to the *chakras*, which constitutes the beginning of *rāja yoga*. The pranic energy is very powerful: through its awakening, a practitioner is able to perform miracles and manipulate the forces of nature. But if the body or mind is impure, then the impurities result in blockages in the flow of pranic energy. These obstructions can lead to physical, emotional

and psychic disturbances, and distress of various kinds, including a strong awakening of passions, which may then run out of control, dragging the unfortunate practitioner to an even lower level.

Haṭha yoga therefore constitutes the necessary preparation for *rāja yoga*. In fact, *haṭha yoga* texts commonly speak of *rāja yoga* as the ultimate goal of *haṭha yoga*. As the invocation at the start of the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* reads:

I bow to that Lord primeval who taught in the beginning the science of *haṭha yoga* – a science that stands out as the first rung on the ladder that leads to the supreme heights of *rāja yoga*.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, Invocation, GSV p.1

Similarly, at the outset of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, Yogī Svātmārāma says that *rāja yoga* is the highest path, to which *haṭha yoga* is the preparation:

Salutations to the glorious primal *guru*, *Shrī Ādinātha* (i.e. *Shiva*), who expounded the knowledge of *haṭha yoga*, which leads like a stairway for those who wish to ascend to the highest stage of *yoga* – *rāja yoga*.

Bowing first to his *guru*, Yogī Svātmārāma expounds the knowledge of *haṭha*, only as a preparation for *rāja yoga*.

Rāja yoga is unknown due to misconceptions caused by differing ideas and concepts. In good will and as a blessing, Svātmārāma offers the light of *haṭha yoga*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:1–3; cf. HYPM pp.23, 27, 29

And:

All the processes of *haṭha* and *laya yoga* (*yoga* of absorption) are but the means to attain *rāja yoga*. One who attains *rāja yoga* is victorious over *kāla* (time, death).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:103, HYPM p.590

But, he says, its goal cannot be reached without the help of a *guru*:

Who really knows the magnitude of *rāja yoga*? Through the *guru*'s words, inner knowledge, liberation and perfection come to fruition.

Without the compassion of the true *guru*, renunciation is impossible, perception of the truth inaccessible, and *sahaḥa samādhi* unobtainable.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:8–9; cf. HYPM p.477

And likewise in the *Shiva Saṃhitā*:

Haṭha yoga cannot be obtained without *rāja yoga*,
nor can *rāja yoga* be attained without *haṭha yoga*.

Therefore, let the *yogī* first learn *haṭha yoga*
from the instructions of a wise *guru*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:181; cf. *SSV* p.82

In the *Shiva Saṃhitā*, the author also begins a more extended section on *rāja yoga*, by echoing the opening lines of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* in which *yoga* is defined as the cessation or suspension of the "waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛttis*)":

By this knowledge, the waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛttis*) are suspended, however active they may be: therefore, let the *yogī* untiringly and unselfishly try to obtain this knowledge. When the modifications of the thinking principle are suspended, then one certainly becomes a *yogī*; then the invisible, holy and pure gnosis is revealed.

Let him contemplate on his own true form in the heaven beyond *brahmāṇḍa*. . . . Following that, let him unceasingly contemplate on the great void (*mahāshūnya*). The great void (*mahāshūnya*), whose beginning is void, whose middle is void, whose end is void, has the brilliancy of tens of millions of suns, and the coolness of tens of millions of moons. By ceaselessly contemplating on that, he will achieve success (*siddhi*). Let him practise this *dhyāna* (contemplation) daily and with dedication, within a year he will undoubtedly achieve all success (*siddhi*). He whose mind is absorbed in that region even for a second is certainly a *yogī* and a good devotee, and is revered in all worlds. Truly, his entire store of sins is immediately destroyed. By seeing that region, one never returns to the path of this mortal universe; let the *yogī*, therefore, practise this with great care by the path of the *svādhishṭhāna*. I cannot describe the grandeur of this contemplation (*dhyāna*). He who practises, knows. He is respected by me. By meditation (*dhyāna*), he at once knows the wonderful effects of this *yoga*; undoubtedly he attains the psychic powers known as *aṇimā* and *laghimā*, etc.

I have thus described *rāja yoga*; it is kept secret in all the *tantras*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:158–68; cf. *SSV* pp.79–80

Here, *mahāshūnya* (great void) is used to mean the final goal of yogic *samādhi* (absorption), the description of which is very similar to the *mahā sunn* described by some Indian *sants*.²

In modern times, *yoga* is well known (though often misunderstood), but this has only happened in little more than the last hundred years due to the dedicated efforts of Indian teachers. One of the first to bring a clear and erudite exposition of *yoga* to the West was Swami Vivekananda. In his book *Raja Yoga*, he provides a simple and general overview, using the imagery of science to appeal to Western minds. He begins by observing that *rāja yoga* – and indeed all religion – is founded upon practice, experience, and realization:

The teachers of the science of *yoga* ... declare that religion is not only based upon the experience of (mystics of) ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he has the same perceptions himself. *Yoga* is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions. It is not much use to talk about religion until one has felt it. ... What right has a man to say he has a soul if he does not feel it, or that there is a God if he does not see Him? If there is a God, we must see Him; if there is a soul we must perceive it; otherwise it is better not to believe. ... Man wants truth, wants to experience truth for himself; when he has grasped it, realized it, felt it within his heart of hearts, then alone, declare the *Vedas*, would all doubts vanish, all darkness be scattered, and all crookedness be made straight. ...

The science of *rāja yoga* proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth. In the first place, every science must have its own method of investigation. If you want to become an astronomer and sit down and cry "Astronomy! Astronomy!" it will never come to you. ... If you want to be an astronomer, you must go to an observatory, take a telescope, study the stars and planets, and then you will become an astronomer. Each science must have its own methods. I could preach you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practised the method.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSV1 pp.127–28

Rāja yoga, he continues, is a means by which the mind can study itself:

The science of *rāja yoga*, in the first place, proposes to give us such a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself. The power of attention, when properly guided, and directed towards the internal world, will analyse the mind, and illumine facts for us. The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated, they illumine. This is our only means of knowledge. Everyone is using it, both in the external and the internal world. ... From our childhood upwards, we have been taught only to pay attention to things external, but never to things internal; hence most of us have nearly lost the faculty of observing the internal mechanism. To turn the mind as it were, inside, stop it from going outside, and then to concentrate all its powers, and throw them upon the mind itself, in order that it may know its own nature, analyse itself, is very hard work. Yet that is the only way to anything which will be a scientific approach to the subject. ...

It is easy to concentrate the mind on external things, the mind naturally goes outwards; but not so in the case of religion, or psychology or metaphysics, where the subject and the object are one. The object

is internal, the mind itself is the object, and it is necessary to study the mind itself – mind studying mind. . . . The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSV1 pp.129–31

By *rāja yoga*, the basic truths of religion become a matter of personal understanding and experience:

Thus will we come to the basis of belief, the real genuine religion. We will perceive for ourselves whether we have souls, whether life is of five minutes or of eternity, whether there is a God in the universe or more. It will all be revealed to us. This is what *rāja yoga* proposes to teach. The goal of all its teaching is how to concentrate the mind; then how to discover the innermost recesses of our own mind; then how to generalize their contents and form our own conclusions from them. It therefore never asks the question what our religion is, whether we are deists or atheists, whether Christians, Jews, or Buddhists. We are human beings; that is sufficient. Every human being has the right and the power to seek for religion. Every human being has the right to ask the reason why, and to have his question answered by himself, if he only takes the trouble.

So far, then, we see that in the study of this *rāja yoga* no faith or belief is necessary. Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself; that is what it teaches us. Truth requires no prop to make it stand.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSV1 pp.131–32

It is not, however, the work of a few days. The mind is deeply scattered in the world, and dedicated practice is required to bring the mind under control, to discover the relationship between the inner and the outer worlds, and to rise above both and find the One at the heart of all:

This study of *rāja yoga* takes a long time and constant practice. A part of this practice is physical, but in the main it is mental. As we proceed we shall find how intimately the mind is connected with the body. . . . We have very little command of our minds. Therefore, to bring that command about, to get that control over body and mind, we must take certain physical help. When the body is sufficiently controlled, we can attempt the manipulation of the mind. By manipulating the mind, we shall be able to bring it under our control, make it work as we like, and compel it to concentrate its powers as we desire.

According to the *rāja yogī*, the external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the

effect. So the external world is the effect, the internal the cause. In the same way, external forces are simply the grosser parts, of which the internal forces are the finer. The man who has discovered and learned how to manipulate the internal forces will get the whole of nature under his control. The *yogī* proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature. He wants to arrive at the point where what we call 'nature's laws' will have no influence over him, where he will be able to get beyond them all. He will be master of the whole of nature, internal and external. . . .

The end and aim of all science is to find the Unity, the One out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that One existing as many. *Rāja yoga* proposes to start from the internal world, to study internal nature, and through that, control the whole – both internal and external. It is a very old attempt.

Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, CWSVI pp.132–33

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**, **bhakti yoga** (►4), **haṭha yoga**, **jñāna yoga**, **karma yoga** (►4), **kuṇḍalinī yoga**, **laya yoga**, **prāṇāyāma**.

1. *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 2:6, 8–9.
2. See **mahā sunn** (4.1).

rechak(a) (S/H) Exhalation of the breath; of uncertain etymology; part of the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. See **prāṇāyāma**.

recollection Recalling something to memory, the remembrance of something; spiritually, interior re-collection of the mind, withdrawing the mind from the senses, collecting together the thought process, and holding the mind in inward concentration on the remembrance of God; concentrated awareness of the presence of the Divine; ceaseless interior prayer. To reach a state of deep interior recollection requires an effective technique, capable of ridding the mind of all attachments and desires concerning the outside world. Otherwise they invade the thought process and break the interior concentration.

Recollection is a process of increasing degree, and the term has been used by Christian writers for the practice of concentrating the mind within, for the general state of interior collectedness, and for more specific states of interior prayer. Interior recollection begins when the soul rests within itself, and seeks to know its own nature. To do this requires relinquishing all thoughts of the world and detachment from the body and things of the material senses:

A soul that desires to attain knowledge of spiritual things must first know itself. . . . The soul does this when it is so recollected and

detached from all earthly preoccupations and from the influence of the senses that it understands itself as it is in its own nature, taking no account of the body.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:30, LPH p.187

But to those whose minds are absorbed by thoughts of the world, even the idea of sitting quietly within themselves, bringing to mind an awareness of the Divine, is “unbearable”:

To those whose desire is turned towards the love of worldly creatures, it seems burdensome and quite unbearable to think of God, although such recollection would be most sweet and wonderfully delightful for them. And if they begin to think of God, He soon escapes their mind, and they revert to their old thoughts in which they have dwelt so long.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 38; cf. FLML (2:8) p.168, FLRR p.172

Nevertheless, to be able to withdraw from the world and thoughts concerning it is a blessing that expands the spiritual consciousness and leads to the divine Source of life:

Try to be recollected in heart, and follow the advice of the wise man who said: “Do your utmost to guard your heart, for out of it comes life.”¹

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 1:88, LPH p.105

Such recollection requires independence of thought:

He who esteems all things as they are, and not as they are taken to be or thought to be by worldly people, is very wise, and is taught by God rather than by man. And he who can inwardly lift his mind up to God, and can regard outward things little, needs not to seek for time or place to pray or to do other good deeds or virtuous works, for the spiritual man can soon recollect himself and fix his mind on God, because he never allows it to be fully occupied in outward things.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 2:1, IC p.77

Among those like Brother Lawrence, who have made interior recollection habitual, it is a constant companion:

It was observed that, in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit.

Practice of the Presence of God, Conversations 4, PPGL pp.23–24

Such recollection then becomes the foundation for deeper recollection and contemplation at the time of prayer. In his *Spiritual Canticle*, John of the Cross writes of the devoted soul's detachment from the world and its deep "interior recollection":

My soul is now stripped, detached, alone and far removed from all created things, both above and below, and has entered so far into interior recollection with You that none of the said things can come within sight of the intimate joy that I possess in You. That is, none of them by their sweetness can move my soul to desire them, nor by their wretchedness and misery to dislike and be troubled by them. For my soul is so far from them and in such deep joy with You that none of these things can come within sight of it.

John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle 40:2; cf. CWJC2 p.382

Recollection is a habit that can be encouraged, practised, and increased. Even among those who have not developed it to the same extent as Brother Lawrence, it can still become a part of the daily routine:

Although we cannot always preserve our recollection, yet we must do so from time to time, and at the least once a day, either in the morning or the evening.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 1:19, ICTK p.49

In fact, for a soul who has developed the habit of recollection, it sometimes requires no more than a trigger to bring about a state of deep recollection:

I knew a soul . . . to whom you had only to say something (in confession or in private conversation) which reminded her of God's presence a little more vividly than usual, and she would go into such a deep state of recollection that she was hard put to it to emerge from it, to speak and answer you. So much so, that she gave the impression of being lifeless, all her senses deadened, until (sooner or later) the Bridegroom allowed her to recover.

François de Sales, Love of God 6:7, LGFS p.239

But, as Brother Lawrence counsels a fellow monk, it is difficult to bring back the wandering mind to a state of recollection:

You tell me nothing new: you are not the only one that is troubled with wandering thoughts. Our mind is extremely roving; but as the will is mistress of all our faculties, she must recall them, and carry them to God, as their last end.

When the mind, for want of being sufficiently reduced by recollection, at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us, even against our wills, to the things of the earth.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 8, PPGL p.45

Recollection is not one state or level of spiritual attainment, but a gradually deepening state, experienced differently to some extent by different individuals. The term covers everything from a calm, collected and tranquil mind to the heights of interior absorption, in which all the normal mental faculties are stilled or suspended.

Among the many Christian mystics, it is probably the Spanish writers, more than others, who have analysed these many states and degrees of recollection (*recogimiento*). Foremost among these writers is the Franciscan monk Francisco de Osuna (b. 1497), whose book the *Third Spiritual Alphabet* was given to St Teresa of Ávila by a relative when she was in her early twenties. The book became one of the greatest literary influences in her life (her own personal copy survives, heavily marked and underlined), from which she was later to draw the basics of her own analysis of interior recollection and the degrees of the spiritual life, found throughout her works, and laid out somewhat systematically in the *Interior Castle*.

Osuna points out that recollection begins with the concentration required of any person who attends carefully to their work. "Without recollection," he says, "one can do nothing that is good."² He also speaks of the actual exercise or practice of spiritual recollection, which consists of

retiring in secret to pray to the Lord in silence, leaving entirely all other business and occupation to give yourself wholly to recollection, ... being dead to all other things.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 15:2, NBA16 p.484; cf. in SSM1 p.81

This exercise, he says, should be practised

for the space of two hours, one hour before midday, the other afterwards, in the quietest time you can find. ... In no art can you become a master without frequently practising it, and the more you practise and use it, the sooner will you so become.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 6:5, NBA16 p.385; cf. in SSM1 p.82

For this fruitful exercise of recollection, Osuna continues, a master is essential, since God works through human agency:

There is nothing in the world, neither exercise, nor science, nor office, nor faculty, nor anything else, however subtle it may be, that has such great need of a master as recollection, albeit the human master in this business can do less in it than the master of any other thing in his faculty: yet he is most necessary.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 8:4, NBA16 p.407; cf. in SSM1 p.82

The exercise or practice of recollection, he adds, leads on to actual recollection itself, to a state of inner quiet, which he describes as the grace “that God pours into the soul”,³ and which he calls the “repose of contemplation”,⁴ the “emptying of ourselves”,⁵ “spiritual emptiness”, “spiritual suspension”,⁶ and by other similar terms.

Osuna is making a distinction between the active exercise of recollection and the passive state of inner quiet. Of the state of interior recollection, he writes:

There are many degrees of recollection, and it is of many kinds. There is one degree that is but the simple quenching of every thought, as it were a kind of restful slumber and tranquil silence, wherein nothing is heard and which none can destroy.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.86

In this state, if a disturbing thought does arise, it is turned away automatically, leaving the soul with the feeling that something came that would have caused a disturbance, but was checked before it could do so:

This way of recollection belongs to those that have advanced farther than the beginner, and it is not without grace, for the soul finds great content in it.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.86

Interior recollection can be experienced in a variety of other ways, as he continues to describe. Sometimes, a person needs to keep an active and careful guard over his state of recollection:

There is another kind of recollection, more active, in which the intellect alone takes part, and the man keeps careful guard over his recollection, taking account of all he does, and bringing to it both strength and skill. In this state, the adepts (*aprovechados*) are accustomed to experience great things.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.86

Sometimes, the self is entirely forgotten in a way that is difficult to understand:

Again, there are some that at times experience a kind of recollection, which is as it were a forgetting of themselves, so that they do not know where they are. And when they turn for a while within themselves, they ask themselves whence this comes, what it has done, and what is the meaning of it; but they can find no answer. This recollection is likewise of the greatest virtue, and with the adept it becomes habitual.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.86

Sometimes, the person is totally detached from the senses, rapt in an inward and childlike joy:

Again, there is another way in which the soul is within the body, tightly enclosed as it were within a box; and here it knows a secret joy, which arises from the spiritual ardour that it feels. The five senses it has discarded, and is as though it had them not. It comprehends nothing that can be uttered, but like a little child it rejoices in the breast with a delight of its own. And it longs for no distractions, nor for the use of eyes or ears, nor for any means whereby it may escape.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.86

In all these circumstances, the understanding is almost, but never entirely, silenced; and in all cases, the sense of time is lost, such that an hour seems like a moment:

In these kinds of recollection, the understanding is never so far silenced as to be deprived completely of its powers. For it always retains a tiny spark, sufficient only for those that are in this state to recognize that they have something that is of God. Thus, in tranquillity and silence it appears that, though it does nothing, the understanding is little by little discovering what comes to pass in these matters, and yet the soul itself would have no wish to do even this, for it would gladly die in the Lord and for His sake be wholly lost.

Moments and crises also arise in which the understanding entirely ceases, as though the soul were without intelligence whatsoever. But then the living spark of simplest knowledge appears again, which is a thing of wonder, since it is in the total cessation of the understanding that the soul receives the most grace. As soon as it revives again and comes out, as it were, from the cloud, it finds itself with this grace, but knows neither whence nor how it has come; and having it, would gladly return to the quenching and cessation of its understanding.

So it returns, like one who plunges into the water and comes out again with that which it desired. In these experiences, the soul

consumes time without perceiving it, and an hour seems scarcely a moment to it. At times, so complete is its ignorance that that which it felt escapes and as it were slips away from the heart: the way to recover it is to enter again into a more intimate recollection.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 21:7, NBA16 p.570ff.; cf. in SSM1 p.87

Following on from this state, Osuna describes the recollection deepening until the will becomes united with the will of God:

Furthermore, it (recollection) is called union, for by means of it man draws near to God, and becomes one spirit with Him by an exchange of wills, so that the man wills nothing but that which God wills, neither does God withdraw Himself from the will of the man, but they are in everything one will.

*Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 6:2,
NBA16 p.380; cf. in SSM1 pp.76–77*

Osuna uses the term recollection for the entire spiritual journey, as he understands it. It is both the process and the final fruit. Recollection, he also says, is “wisdom”, the “art of love”, the “kindling” of divine love in the heart, the “attraction” of the soul to God, the “coming of the Lord to the soul”, “spiritual ascension”, the “third heaven to which contemplatives are caught up”,⁷ and so on.⁸

Osuna’s description became the basis for many of the descriptions of recollection given by later Spanish mystical writers. Most well known among these is Teresa of Ávila, whose terminology regarding recollection owes much to Osuna’s work. There are also differences in use of the same terminology, however, between these many writers. Osuna’s active recollection, for instance, corresponds to some extent to St Teresa’s preparatory exercises for entering the “fourth mansions”, wherein the soul experiences the prayer of recollection and the prayer of quiet,⁹ the latter being a deeper state than the former. These two states lead on to the fifth, sixth and seventh mansions, wherein the soul experiences the prayer of union, the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage, all described as degrees of union with God.

A comparison of their terminology, however, is more of an academic exercise and may hold little practical value. As Osuna points out, individuals experience things in different ways. Every individual is different, and mystical states are not readily amenable to definitive categorization:

Those that give themselves wholeheartedly to this sacred exercise of recollection receive many kinds of grace from the Lord, each in his own manner, and according to his ability or deserving, and the preparation that he makes to receive it.

Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 10:7, NBA16 p.440; cf. in SSM1 p.88

St Teresa's writings are rambling, and are not always consistent in their use of terminology. Like Osuna, she often speaks generally of recollection without implying any particular state. She also advises that the mind can be brought back to a state of inner recollection by the concentration of thought induced through reading some spiritual book or by seeking the presence of God in the things of nature:

Those who follow this path of no discursive meditation will find that a book can be a help for recollecting oneself quickly. It helped me also to look at fields, or water, or flowers. In these things I found a remembrance of the Creator. I mean that they awakened and recollected me.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 9:5; cf. CWT1 p.102

She also speaks of her own experiences of recollection in a general manner:

On one occasion, when I was reciting the Hours with the community, my soul suddenly became recollected and seemed to me to become bright all over like a mirror: no part of it – back, sides, top, or bottom – but was completely bright, and in the centre of it was a picture of Christ our Lord as I generally see Him. I seemed to see Him in every part of my soul as clearly as in a mirror.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 40, CWT1 p.292

See also: **attention** (8.1), **concentration**, **prayer of Jesus**, **prayer of quiet** (8.1), **prayer of recollection** (8.1), **remembrance of God**, **repetition**, **sumiran**.

1. *Proverbs* 4:23.
2. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 15:1, *NBA16* p.482; cf. in *SSM1* p.81.
3. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 2:2, *NBA16* p.335; cf. in *SSM1* p.82.
4. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 12:1, *NBA16* p.451, in *SSM1* p.82.
5. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 19:1, *NBA16* p.534, in *SSM1* p.82.
6. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 15:2, *NBA16* p.483, in *SSM1* p.82.
7. *Cf.* 2 *Corinthians* 12:2.
8. Francisco de Osuna, *Third Spiritual Alphabet* 6:3, *NBA16* pp.380–81; cf. in *SSM1* pp.76–77.
9. E.g. Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle* 4:1, *Way of Perfection* 28, in *SSM1* pp.80–81, 87.

remembrance of God The act of remembering God; dwelling constantly upon the Divine; awareness of the divine presence; a state of inner recollection or concentration in which the attention is focused on God, rather than merely calling God to mind; in the Orthodox Church, often the repetition of the Jesus prayer. Since the soul was once united with God, the continual recollection of Him or awareness of His presence is essentially the soul's remembrance of a state it once knew; a persistent theme in the writings of the mystics of all cultures and traditions.

The fundamental barrier between the soul and God is the sense of self, the ego:

Self-love, love of pleasure and love of praise banish remembrance of God from the soul. Self-love begets unimaginable evils. And when remembrance of God is absent, there is a tumult of the passions within us.

Theodoros the Great Ascetic, Spiritual Texts 92, Philokalia, PCT2 p.34

Conversely, the "unceasing remembrance of God" purifies the mind. Ignatius Brianchaninov is referring to continuous repetition of the Jesus prayer:

He who desires to see the Lord within himself endeavours to purify his heart by the unceasing remembrance of God. The spiritual land of a man pure in soul is within him.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 6, OPI p.51

Unceasing remembrance requires surrender to God, accepting everything that happens as originating with Him:

If you wish to remember God unceasingly, do not reject as undeserved what happens to you, but patiently accept it as your due. For patient acceptance of whatever happens kindles the remembrance of God, whereas refusal to accept weakens the spiritual purpose of the heart and so makes it forgetful.

Mark the Ascetic, Made Righteous by Works 134, Philokalia, PCT1 p.136

The heart is filled with joy when it is occupied with remembrance of the Divine, whatever the circumstances:

Give all your mind to Him that He may keep it from sorrow, here and in eternity. Never let your heart be separated from Him, however beset you may be by adversity and wretchedness. Then you will be able joyfully to possess Him and to love Him without end. You will show yourself to be a true lover if you never relinquish the remembrance of God in good times or in bad.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 41; cf. FLML (2:11) pp.184–85, FLRR p.185

In practice, the remembrance of God is often swept aside by a host of other thoughts. But when the thought of God does arise, the mind can be suddenly filled with an “impulse” of divine love:

An impulse is what I call a desire that sometimes comes upon the soul, and even very habitually, without any preceding prayer. But suddenly there comes to it a remembrance of its separation from God, or of some word it hears that refers to this separation. This remembrance is so powerful and has such force sometimes that in an instant the soul seems to be beside itself.

Teresa of Ávila, Testimonies 59:13, CWT1 p.429

The fruits of such remembrance are many. It has an influence on those whom such a person meets:

He that honours all men by his remembrance of God will find all men his helpers by the hidden decree of God.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 45, Profitable Advice, MTIN p.215

Constant remembrance of God also brings joy beyond measure:

Now, now I am coming to the goal toward which I have been struggling for ten years – a constant remembrance of God. Almost uninterrupted, day and night, day in and day out, that bliss courses through me. I never had really believed it could be achieved, not by me anyway. But it is here, it is here, ever since God took my heart. There He lives, filling it completely. Oh, how is it possible that there should be such joy? Joy that never grows less, never palls, but increases and expands.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM p.51

See also: **concentration, forgetfulness (6.2), prayer of Jesus, recollection.**

repetition The act of repeating something; spiritually, the repetition of a prayer or *mantra* as a means of inwardly concentrating the mind, such as the prayer of Jesus or any of the yogic or Buddhist *mantras*, Sufi *dhikrs*, and so on.

In Christianity, the practice is generally reckoned to have been started by the desert fathers of Egypt, whose repetition consisted of a *monologistos* (Gk. single thought) – a prayer of just one word or phrase. St Augustine records that “the brethren of Egypt offer prayers that are frequent, but very brief and suddenly shot forth”.¹

See also: **attention (8.1), concentration, dhikr, prayer of Jesus, recollection, remembrance of God, sumiran.**

1. St Augustine, *Letters* 130:10.20, in *OPJ* p.143 (n.15).

righteous action, righteous deeds See **pious deeds**.

riyāḍah (A), **riyāẓat** (P) (pl. *riyāḍāt*) *Lit.* practice, exercise, discipline, training, physical work; sustained effort or practice; used in a wide variety of contexts; thus, physical exercise, gymnastics, sports; intellectual exercises or games (*riyāḍāt ‘aqlīyah*); living in accordance with Muslim *sharī‘ah* (religious law); spiritual practice, austerities, ascetic practice, meditation, including such ‘disciplines’ as repentance, hardship, endurance of suffering, self-denial, self-abnegation, and so on; sometimes used more or less synonymously with *mujāḥadah*, in the sense of spiritual combat or spiritual struggle; used in such expressions as *riyāḍāt qalbī* (practices of the heart), meaning spiritual disciplines of various kinds intended to develop the inner being.

Although the term is used in a general sense, there is common agreement that the purpose of *riyāḍah* is purification of the spirit, so that it may return to God:

Spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) is an important undertaking for a way-farer whose heart has succumbed to the vistas of the Unseen and the evidences of the realm of pre-eternity. It polishes the heart clean of the turbidity of one’s physical nature so that it is prepared to receive that which flows therein from the Source of sanctity. . . .

The purpose of spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) is to refine and make the spirit more subtle. Once the veil of one’s physical nature and the passions has been removed, the spirit is raised up to the realm of boundless wonders and to oceans with pearls beyond all price. After this, he understands the subject of Reality as it has been explained to him. Thereafter the devotee moves towards the Source of all actions and attributes, disregarding any secondary causes and all traditions and customs that might impede his direct line to the place of origin. The *Qur’ān* states, “Return to your Lord, content in His good pleasure.”¹

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 2:11, *MARB* pp.32–33; cf. in *SSE7* pp.12–13

This purification involves curbing the lower nature (*nafs*):

Spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) signifies the refinement of the *nafs*’ temperament, for to refine the *nafs* is to separate it from the adulteration of physical nature and its inclinations.

Jurjānī, Ta’rīfāt, KTJ p.106, in *SSE7* p.12

This process, says Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad, is helped by “service”:

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Khafīf said, “Spiritual discipline (*riyāzat*) means the breaking of the *nafs* through service and encouraging the *nafs* to engage in spiritual discipline (*riyāzat*).”

‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’* 2, TAN2 p.131, in SSE7 p.13

Tahānawī adds that *riyāḍah* involves control of “lust”, following the *sharī‘ah* (Islamic religious law), sleeping little, avoiding company, and generally remaining free from sin:

A certain sage maintains that spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) means turning away from lust. It has also been said that spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) involves performing the daily prayers and fasting, which are incumbent upon oneself, preserving oneself day and night from the dictates of sin and baseness, preventing sleep, and avoiding the company of others.

Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, KIFT2 p.226; cf. in SSE7 p.12

Al-Ghazālī counsels that it means limiting one’s needs to their bare essentials:

The best form of austerity (*riyāḍah*) is to avoid accumulation of those things that will not follow you beyond the grave, viz. food, dress and house, and only to keep sufficient of such things as to fulfil your basic needs. However, if you use or accumulate more than is absolutely necessary, then the desire for the thing will follow you to the grave. Only when the heart is kept engaged in the remembrance of the Lord is eternal life gained. One should become wholly God’s, and keep a connection with the world only to the extent that is absolutely necessary and does not obstruct recollection and remembrance (*dhikr wa fikr*) of the Lord.

Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* 3:1, IUDG3 p.89; cf. RRS p.73

Riyāzat has a connotation of pleasing, gratifying or satisfying someone in authority. With the Sufi love of rhyming word pairs, *riyāzat* is sometimes compared to *riyāsat* (authority, sovereignty). The ascetic, concerned with himself, practises self-discipline (*riyāzat*); the true lover of the Divine has forgotten himself and dwells with the divine Sovereign. Hujwīrī recalls:

It is related that he (Abū al-Sarī Maṣṣūr ibn ‘Ammār) said: “All mankind may be reduced to two types – he who knows himself and whose business is self-mortification and discipline, and he who knows his Lord and whose business is to serve and worship and please Him.” Accordingly, the worship of the former is discipline (*riyāzat*), while the

worship of the latter is sovereignty (*riyāsat*): the former practises devotion in order that he may attain a high degree, but the latter practises devotion having already attained everything. What a vast difference between the two! One subsists in self-mortification (*mujāhadat*), the other in contemplation (*mushāhadat*).

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XI, KMM p.158; cf. KM pp.126–27

He also writes that there were those in his day who – finding *riyāzat* difficult – believed that it was no longer a feasible practice, and wanted to find God without first learning to exercise self-discipline:

You must know that at the present time there are some people who cannot endure the burden of discipline (*riyāzat*), and seek authority (*riyāsat*) without discipline, and think that all *ṣūfīs* are like themselves; and when they hear the sayings of those who have passed away and see their eminence and read of their devotional practices they examine themselves, and finding that they are far inferior to the *shaykhs* of old, they no longer attempt to emulate them, but say: “We are not as they, and there is none like them in our time.” Their assertion is absurd, for God never leaves the earth without a proof (*ḥujjat*), or the Muslim community without a saint, as the Messenger said: “One sect of my people shall continue in goodness and truth until the hour of the Resurrection.” And he said also: “There shall always be forty among my people who have the nature of Abraham.”

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XII, KMM p.202; cf. KM p.161

Riyāḍah is for the majority of human beings whose mind is in need of control. Rūmī divides human beings into two broad categories: the saints, who are like the “angels” in character, and those who have the nature of “asses” – “they have become pure anger and absolute lust”. He says that the saint has gone beyond the need for *riyāzat*:

His outer form is that of Adam, but his reality is Gabriel:
He has been delivered
from anger and sensual passion and disputation.
He has been delivered from discipline (*riyāzat*)
and asceticism (*zuhd*) and self-mortification (*jihād*):
You might say he was not even born of a child of Adam.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 1507–8; cf. MJR4 p.355

See also: **mujāhadah** (►4).

1. *Qur’ān* 89:28.

rlung gom (T) *Lit.* air (*rlung*) mastery (*gom*); ‘air’ or ‘wind’ meditation; a Tibetan Buddhist meditational practice for controlling the flow of the subtle ‘wind’ or life energy (S. *prāṇa*) throughout the body; hence, *rlung gom pa*, a practitioner of *rlung gom*; phonetically rendered as *lung-gom*.

According to legend, the practice of *rlung gom* is said to endow practitioners with the power of levitation, enabling them to run extraordinarily long distances at great speed, without rest, their stride being a sort of running leap, barely touching the ground as they proceed. While running, they maintain an inward meditational focus and should not be disturbed. Little is known of the technique, but the practice is presumably akin to the yogic practice of *prāṇāyāma*, which has similarities with other Tibetan tantric practices, such as *gtum mo* (inner heat), that focus the attention on the four upper *chakras* (centres of *prāṇa*). The element (*tattva*, *bhūta*) associated with movement is that of fire, which has its subtle centre in the navel *chakra*. It may be presumed that the practice of *rlung gom* entails focusing of the attention at this centre, and gaining control over the energy of the fire element. Like all such practices, the acquisition of miraculous powers is not regarded as the primary purpose. In fact, they are generally considered a distraction from the higher goal of enlightenment.

In his *Way of the White Clouds*, the German Buddhist Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898–1985) writes that “one of the main training centres of this yogic art (is) not far from Shigatse in a side valley of the Nyang-chu, in the famous monastery of Nyang-to Kyi-phug (‘Happy Cave in the Upper Nyang Valley’).”¹ But he provides no details of the actual practice.

In her book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, Alexandra David-Néel, the first European woman to reach Lhasa, describes her 1924 meeting with a *rlung gom pa*:

I noticed, far away in front of us, a moving black spot which my field glasses showed to be a man. I felt astonished. Meetings are not frequent in that region (Chang Thang in northern Tibet). . . . As I continued to observe him through the glasses, I noticed that the man proceeded at an unusual gait and, especially, with an extraordinary swiftness. . . .

By that time he had nearly reached us; I could clearly see his perfectly calm impassive face and wide-open eyes with their gaze fixed on some invisible far distant object situated somewhere high up in space. The man did not run. He seemed to lift himself from the ground, proceeding by leaps. It looked as if he had been endowed with the elasticity of a ball and rebounded each time his feet touched the ground.

Alexandra David-Néel, Magic and Mystery in Tibet, MMTD pp.200–3

1. Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Way of the White Clouds*, WWCG p.79.

rmi lam (T) (S. *svapana*) *Lit.* dream; phonetically rendered as *milam*; a practice in which the meditator first learns to recognize dreams as dreams, to remain conscious while dreaming, and then to manipulate dreams in a spiritual direction; a practice that results in the realization that the world itself is also a dream – still of the mind, but of another kind; also called dream *yoga*, *yoga* of the dream state, and sleep *yoga*; akin to what in the West has been called lucid dreaming, although lucid dreaming lacks the spiritual element; one of the six *yogas* of Nāropa and the six similar *yogas* of Niguma (Nāropa's disciple, thought to have been his wife or sister). *Rmi lam* is also used metaphorically for the unreal or dream-like nature of worldly (*laukika*) existence.

The subtle or astral body has also been called a 'dream body'. Though the astral body is different from the imaginary 'body' created by the dreaming mind, there is some kinship between the two since both consist of 'mindstuff', and both are unfettered by the constraints of materiality. Both the dream body and the astral body are projections of the mind, as indeed is the physical body. The mind is multifaceted and can project in many – sometimes extraordinary – ways, something that is helpful to bear in mind when attempting to understand tantric practices and experiences.

Dream *yoga* is described in the Sanskrit *Mahāmāyā Tantra* ('Great Illusion *Tantra*'), which – in Tibetan translation – became one of the five leading *tantras* of the *Shangpa Kagyü* school of Tibetan Buddhism. Various techniques are described by different texts and schools, but a number of features are found in common. The basis of the practice is control of the subtle life energies (*prāṇa*) that function during sleep, using the usual tantric means involving visualization of seed *mantras* and one's *yi dam*, control of the breathing, and focusing the attention at the four *chakras* utilized in Tibetan tantric practice (crown, throat, heart, and navel). The attention is concentrated particularly at the throat *chakra*, which is the centre associated with dreaming.

To bring about the recognition of dreams as dreams, the practitioner first instils the intention to do so in his mind by means of prayers and offerings to his *guru* (*i.e.* by *guru yoga*). He prays that he should become able to practise the spiritual path while in a state of conscious dreaming. Then, during the day, he constantly reminds himself that all objects of perception are only dreams or illusions. The stronger his mindfulness of the dream nature of material things, the greater becomes his capacity to become aware of his dreams while dreaming. In a treatise on the six *dharma*s or *yogas* of Nāropa, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) advises:

He should rely on a *guru* who possesses the unmistakable experience of dream *yoga*; otherwise (if he follows the wrong instruction from the wrong *guru*), he may have some experiences in the beginning, but will have nothing but confusion in the end.

Once the dream is recognized, the *yogī* should visualize himself as his patron *buddha* (*yi dam*) or practise the *guru yoga* together with offerings and prayers. (In the dream state), the *yogī* should make an effort to create many clear, auspicious dreams by his own will, try to recognize them, expand them, and utilize them as an opportunity to practise various benevolent devotions. If an inauspicious dream occurs, the *yogī* should transform it into an auspicious one. He should pray to his *guru* with great earnestness to grant him the ability to do so. In the dream state, the *yogī* should perform the ritual of offering the *gtor mas* (sacrificial objects) to the *yi dam* and protective deities, and pray to them to grant his wishes, *etc.* In his retreat-confinement, the *yogī* should work hard on these practices.

Tsongkhapa, On the Six Yogas of Nāropa; cf. ETTT pp.213–14

Together with this resolution to recognize dreams as dreams, the practitioner should also – while remaining in the dream state – practise concentration at the throat *chakra* by means of seed *mantras*, visualization of his *yi dam*, and directing the *prāṇa*. By such means he will learn to manipulate his dreams, and progress to other exercises among the six *yogas* of Nāropa, notably those of the illusory body (*sgyu lus*) and the practice of luminosity (*'od gsal*):

The first stage of dream practice is to recognize dreams during the time of dreaming. The next stage is to use the dream as a means to practise various spiritual exercises including that of illusory body (*sgyu lus*). Dreams are then transformed into the practice of luminosity (*'od gsal*). A constant practice on dream will have great effect on waking hours. There will be a time when the learner will see no distinction between the dream, waking hours, and death. The practice of luminosity (*'od gsal*) is believed to be the essence of the path.

Ringu Tulku, Six Yogas of Nāropa, SYNRP p.42

The foregoing are generalities for which more specific, though to some extent varying, instructions are found among tantric texts. The more esoteric of these practices are akin to those associated with *gtum mo* (inner heat) and other methods of tantric meditation. A classic example of such a text is the *Treatise on the Six Yogas of Niguma* by Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso (1475–1542), the second Dalai Lama.¹ He describes six stages of progress: recognition of dreams; purification of dreams; multiplying the objects perceived in dreams; emanating oneself as an illusory body within the dream state; cultivating awareness of objects perceived in the dream state; and meditation on the emptiness (*shūnyatā*) of dreams. He writes:

Inside the central channel at one's throat is a tiny red lotus (*i.e.* *chakra*) having four petals. At its centre stands a letter *am*, red in colour, exceedingly radiant and the size of a mustard seed. Fix the mind on it and recollect the dream resolution as before. Here it is very important to prevent the mind from wandering and to set a strong resolve not to become lost in sleep and, whenever a dream arises, to recognize whatever arises in the mind as a dream. Should you wake up in the middle of the dream, do not open your eyes. Rather, draw up the lower energies and recollect the dream, trying to keep the dream going again. This helps in the practice of recognizing the dream state and strengthens the power of increasing the intensity of dreaming.

Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso, On the Six Yogas of Niguma, in DLTM p.140

The second stage – purification of the dream – involves similar tantric practices. This is where the practitioner attempts to make his dreams malleable and, turning them towards spiritual life, to progress on the spiritual path while dreaming by separating the dream body from the material body:

“My ordinary body is asleep in bed and this thing appearing to me now is but a dream body. All the things now appearing in my field of perception are but the manifestations of a dream.”

Thinking in this way, determine to project yourself to a pure land (heaven) such as *tushita* or *sukhāvatī*, where one can see the faces of the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* and can hear their sacred teachings; or else determine to take birth consciously in the impure world in order to work for the benefit of the living beings.

Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso, On the Six Yogas of Niguma, in DLTM p.141

Having gained some control over the dream state, the third stage – multiplying the dream objects – is achieved by manifesting the body in which one is dreaming into two, four, eight and so on, until one has a multiplicity of dream bodies. The practitioner has now acquired some proficiency in the ability to direct his mind and consciousness while in the dream state. The fourth stage of the practice – that of emanation – is to project or manifest oneself as one of the tantric deities. This is aided by long practice of such visualization during the waking state – a standard practice in Tibetan *tantra*. Deities suggested by Gendün Gyatso for this practice include *Yamāntaka* (‘Destroyer of Death’), who overcomes death; *Garuḍa* (a mythical bird and enemy of the mythological race of serpents), who overcomes serpents; and *Hayagrīva* (a horse-necked incarnation of *Vishṇu*), who overcomes kingly spirits. These and other emanations are practised while in the consciously controlled dream state. The dreamer can also practise emanation as one of

the five elements (*tattvas*, *bhūtas*), changing from one to the other by exercise of will; or he may transmute base metal into dream gold.

By developing conscious control of the dream state, the practitioner gains in proficiency and is able to perform tantric practices while in the dream state. Eventually, he is able to project himself as *Heruka*, the tantric deity embodying bliss and emptiness, enabling himself to meditate on the emptiness or ‘that-ness’ which lies at the essence of all things:

When you recognize the dream state, meditate on yourself as *Heruka* with consort. Send lights forth from the syllable *hūṃ* at your heart, causing the world to melt into the *maṇḍala* palace, and the beings of the world to dissolve into the visualized deities of the *maṇḍala*. These then dissolve into *Heruka* and his consort, the consort dissolves into *Heruka*, he (the practitioner) into the *hūṃ* at his heart, and the *hūṃ* into itself from the bottom upward, and eventually into the zigzag of flame above. The flame then dissolves into inapprehensible nothingness. Hold the mind here on the view of emptiness.

Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso, On the Six Yogas of Niguma, in DLTM p.142

Gendün Gyatso then adds a concluding comment on possible hindrances to the practice:

There are four hindrances to the practice of dream yoga (*rmi lam*). The first is to not recognize a dream as a dream. The second is to wake up from the dream when the *yoga* is applied. The third is to be disturbed in the dream by confusing factors such as lust, caused by the drop (of *prāṇa* perceived at the throat *chakra*) moving to the lower *chakras*. Finally, the fourth is to not experience any dreams.

The remedy to the first problem is to set a firm resolution before going to sleep to recognize any dream that arises. The remedy to the second is not to open one’s eyes, even if one awakens, but instead to think over and recapture the dream that was occurring. The remedy to the third hindrance is to bring the mystic drop back up to the throat *chakra*. Finally, the remedy to the fourth problem is to set a firm determination to dream many dreams and to recognize them when they occur. Such are the teachings of the lineage *gurus*. This completes my elucidation of the dream yoga (*rmi lam*).

Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso, On the Six Yogas of Niguma, in DLTM pp.142–43

See also: **lucid dreaming** (8.1).

1. Gyalwa Gendün Gyatso, *On the Six Yogas of Niguma*, in *DLTM* pp.137–43.

ruḥaniyyut (He) *Lit.* spirituality; spark of spirituality immanent in the creation; from the Arabic *rūḥānīyah* (spirituality); cognate with the Hebrew *ruaḥ* and the Arabic *rūḥ*, which both mean ‘spirit’.

Moshe Idel, a contemporary scholar of the Kabbalah, outlines the historical development of the term from magical practices, especially those of astrology:

In ancient Hellenistic magic and in Arabic and Jewish medieval magic the dominant view asserted is that it is possible to attract downward the spiritual forces of the celestial bodies (planets, *etc.*). It was believed that these spiritual forces – named *pneumata* in Greek, *rūḥānīyah* in Arabic, and *ruḥaniyyut* in Hebrew – could be attracted and captured here below by means of special types of objects and rituals, whose natures are consonant with the features of the corresponding celestial bodies. These bodies were called in Arabic *hayākil*, meaning ‘palaces’ (related to the Hebrew *hekhalot*, meaning ‘palaces’, ‘sanctuaries’, or ‘inner realms’). . . . The major writings on this astro-magical type of thought in Judaism are found in the (critical) descriptions of idolatry in Maimonides, in certain authors who were more sympathetic than he was to this sort of activity, such as Rabbi Yehudah Halevi and Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, and in the work of some of the fourteenth-century Jewish Castilian thinkers, who combined magic with philosophy and, at times, with Kabbalah.

In fifteenth-century Kabbalah, the use of the Hebrew language to draw down the spiritual force became explicit. We also find, during this and succeeding centuries, assumptions that each and every *sefirah* (emanation of a divine quality) has a spiritual force of its own. Thus, the astrological structure of this model was projected onto the ‘higher’ theosophical structure (of the *sefirot*), thereby diminishing the potential criticism that a strong astrological stand could arouse. While not totally obliterating the astral (astrological) meaning of the term *ruḥaniyyut*, some kabbalists attributed to the sefirotic realm a structure that they adopted from astrological thought. . . . Moreover, it is possible to detect some translation of aspects of the astral bodies to the corresponding divine powers, the *sefirot*.

Moshe Idel, Hasidism, HEMI p.66

By overlaying the concept of the *sefirot* upon astrological beliefs, kabbalists created a synthesis that made the astrological elements more acceptable to the more mainstream tradition:

Especially important for our discussion is the emergence of the term *ruḥaniyyut ha-sefirot*, the spiritual force of the *sefirot*. This phrase still retains the concept of multiplicity in the spiritual world: each *sefirah*

possesses a distinct inner power that reflects the specific quality of the respective divine power. . . . Therefore, while accepted by the kabbalists, the magical model was changed in two major aspects: the theological – actually, the theosophical plane – supplanted the celestial-astrological one; while the magical practices were replaced, to a great extent, by the Jewish rites and especially by the ritualistic use of the Hebrew language in prayer and study.

This is a pivotal change, which took place in a conspicuous way in the writings of Alemanno, Alkabez and Cordovero, and is part of an attempt to offer an explanation of the efficacy of the commandments (*mizvot*), in addition to or as an alternative to the more common theurgical (magical) rationales in kabbalistic literature. . . . It is by fulfilling the divine will that the material and spiritual attainments are drawn down and not by attempts to force that will or short-circuit the order of nature.

Although . . . the term *ruḥaniyyut* preserves in many cases overtones from its magical sources, in many others, both in Cordoverian Kabbalah and Hasidism, this term designates the ideal spiritual realm, without maintaining any of its astro-magical meanings. It is this sense of the term that penetrated modern Hebrew, where *ruḥaniyyut* means spirituality, a fact that was instrumental in the neglect of the magical meaning of this term in some classical mystical texts.

Moshe Idel, Hasidism, HEMI pp.66–67

Depicting the functioning of the *ruḥaniyyut* in Arabic thought as spiritual forces or lights, another contemporary scholar, Shlomo Pines, explains that the planets and various created beings act as intermediaries between God and man. These bodies and beings, which were known as supernal temples or *hekhalot*,

receive an influx from the *ruḥaniyyut* that set them in motion with a view to order and to the good; they in turn are the causes of everything that happens (in the sublunar world). Men honour each of these ‘temples’ with various kinds of observance and worship, such as magical and astrological operations, fumigations, and prayers. For addressing oneself to a ‘temple’ is tantamount to addressing oneself to the *ruḥanni*y to which it pertains, and, beyond that, to the Lord of lords (*Rabb al-arbāb*).

Shlomo Pines, “Shī’ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi’s Kuzari,” STJK pp.196–97

Like Arabic magic treatises, Jewish texts provided instructions for drawing down this spiritual force or light – the *ruḥaniyyut* (He). Scholars such as

Moshe Idel have shown that the term, with a magical meaning, entered some Jewish kabbalist texts, particularly the works of Abraham Abulafia and Isaac of Akko (who was associated with Abulafia's school) during the fourteenth century, and of Moses Cordovero in the sixteenth century. These meditation techniques seem to have been derived from the magical practices of earlier times. Isaac describes his efforts to draw down the "divine Consciousness (*Sekhel ha-elohi*)" through his permutation of the letters in his "chamber of seclusion".¹ He also calls this force the "divine supernal force". Idel concludes that "this *ruḥaniyyut* is tantamount to the divine Intellect (*Sekhel*, Consciousness, Intelligence) that is caused to descend by the permutation of letters and their pronunciation."²

A document originating with an anonymous follower of Abulafia's school reveals the belief in a close relationship between the spiritual force of the angels and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Having quoted from the *Sefer Yeẓirah* ('the Book of Formation'), which makes frequent mention of the twenty-two letters, the author adds:

By this he (the author of *Sefer Yeẓirah*) means that everything He created out of the spiritual force of the angels for the external souls will be engraved in these twenty-two words, and in this way man will have knowledge concerning the world.

Hemdah Genuzah, HGZE p.43; cf. in HEMI p.157

Here, the astrological and magical implications are quite evident. In fact:

Recitations of magical names are openly connected to the seven planets and their angels, and it seems that the incorporation of spiritual force into the letters is part of the method of drawing down the influx of the astral bodies. As far as I know, this is the first Jewish or Hebrew text that overtly states that the Hebrew letters are pregnant with "spiritual force". In the late fourteenth century, the term *ruḥaniyyut* as a designation for spiritual forces superior to the astral bodies became widespread.

Moshe Idel, Hasidism, HEMI p.157

Among the sixteenth-century kabbalists, spiritual exercises founded on a belief in *ruḥaniyyut* were practised by Rabbi Moses Cordovero and others. Cordovero advocated concentration on colours, the use of amulets, and the manipulation and combination of letters, words and names in order to draw down the divine force or energy. In his prayers and study of the *Torah*, his intention was to draw down the *ruḥaniyyut* into the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and then return them to their 'divine roots' by the breath of the one who spoke the words. This practice involved breathing exercises, but

was not dependent on the practitioner's understanding of the words. It was a semi-mechanical process of focusing the attention on the sounds of the words as they were uttered. In later Hasidism, this practice was expanded: not only was the *ruḥaniyyut* drawn into the letters, but into practitioner's consciousness as well.

In a similar vein, in 1571, the kabbalist Rabbi Simeon ibn Lavi of Tripoli in Libya wrote about *hamshakhat ha-shefa* (the drawing down of the divine outpouring). In his work *Ketem Paz* ('Fine Gold'), he discusses the way in which human beings, through their thinking, can influence the Deity by drawing down the *shefa* from the realm of the *sefirot*.³

By the time of the Ba'al Shem Tov (1698–1760) and the rise of Hasidism, the term had become invested with a more mystical emphasis, replacing that of the magical. A practitioner's intention was to divest himself of corporeality and be united with the spiritual essences – the *ruḥaniyyut*. It was believed that by pronouncing the spoken words of the prayers the devotee could draw down the spiritual force of *ruḥaniyyut*. As Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoy says:

The main purpose of the study of *Torah* and of prayer is to cleave himself to the inwardness of the spiritual force (*penimut ruḥaniyyut*) of the light of *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite) that is within the pronounced letters of *Torah* and prayer.

Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoy, Toldot, TYYY fol.25a, in HEMI p.163

The Hasidic masters taught that there was *ruḥaniyyut* or spirituality – a particle of the Divine – in everything, even in inanimate objects. If *ruḥaniyyut* was absent, the object or being could not exist. By observing the *miṣvot* (biblical commandments) in a particular way, and by praying with full concentration on the letters and investing them with spirituality, a person could achieve total *devekut* – intense devotion and attachment to God.

Some modern scholars have noted that although the *ḥasidim* were not religious scholars who remained continuously occupied with religious activities, they still wanted to maintain a sense of the divine presence throughout their daily activities – secular as well as religious. Understanding there to be a spiritual element in every thing and every activity allowed them to practise *devekut* in whatever they did and wherever they were.⁴ At every moment it was possible to be aware of the presence of God.

As the modern scholar Miles Krassen writes, it was a Hasidic belief that “food and the other physical objects with which a person is confronted are important because they bear a particular relationship to his soul.”⁵ There is thus a spiritual connection between an individual and every material object that he uses and every being – human, animal, or plant – that he encounters. According to Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh (c. 1745–1795), the Ba'al Shem Tov observed:

The *Torah* shows concern for a Jew's property. Why is this so? For it is a great principle that with regard to everything that a person wears or eats or makes use of, he benefits from the divine energy (*hiyyut*) that is in that particular thing. Were it not for that spiritual element (*ruhaniyyut*), the thing could not exist at all. There are holy sparks there that belong to the root of his soul.

Ba'al Shem Tov, Zava'at ha-Rivash 109, TBST p.38, in UHEH p.60

When making use of any "particular thing", the *hasidim* believed that they were elevating the sparks of the divine light, which they identified with the *ruhaniyyut*. This belief originated among the sixteenth-century kabbalists, who taught that sparks of the primal divine light had become imprisoned in matter when they separated from their divine Source, and are hence universally present in all created things. It was therefore the duty of the devotee to raise these sparks to the divine level, thus restoring the divine harmony and unity through observance of the *mitzvot* (biblical commandments), and the practice of prayers and 'unification' exercises involving repetition of names. This teaching was carried forward into Hasidism, where it became combined with the teaching of the *ruhaniyyut*.

The understanding that everything in creation has an underlying spiritual energy imbues a person with a deep reverence for everything he encounters. Rabbi Meshullam continues:

The Ba'al Shem Tov, of blessed memory, said what one eats is a being (*beni adam*), what one sits on is a being, and the object one makes use of is a being. In other words, (there are) sparks in those things. Accordingly, a person should have compassion for his possessions and for everything that is his, because of the sparks that are there – in order to have compassion for the holy sparks.

Ba'al Shem Tov, Zava'at ha-Rivash 109, TBST p.38, in UHEH p.60

The goal of this practice and understanding is *devekut* (cleaving, intense attachment) – regarded as the purpose behind all worship. *Torah* study and observance of the *mitzvot* are necessary to increase one's sensitivity to the divine presence and to evoke true devotion and mystic union. According to Hasidic belief, prayer and *Torah* study, performed with proper concentration, result in the *ruhaniyyut* being drawn down into the letters and words; and prayer performed in a state of *devekut* returns the *ruhaniyyut* to their source. As Rabbi Meshullam writes in his *Yosher Divrei Emet* ('Honest Words of Truth'):

When a person gives utterance to the letters, (he) activates the supernal vitality. When he cleaves to God with an undivided (or pure) mind,

he returns the vitality that emanated down from the supernal thought until it reached (the level of) speech and was placed in the person's mouth. Through his longing for God with the words of the prayer, he causes the letters to fly to their root, if he manages (to pray) with a pure thought in love and awe. This is called female waters (since *ruḥaniyyut* is a grammatically feminine word in Hebrew). It (occurs) if he is able to draw *ruḥaniyyut* from above into his speech, to cause the letters to fly above, as written in *Pardes*⁶ and quoted in the introduction to the prayer book, *Sha'arei Shamayim*.⁷ But, if not, as long as his thought, at least, is pure, this is also called uniting, for he unites the utterance with the thought.

Rabbi Meshullam Feibush, Yosher Divrei Emet 37, YDEF, in UHEH p.137

One of the most interesting statements made by Rabbi Meshullam is that a devotee should not regard the physical world as real, since it has far less reality than the concealed spiritual forces upon which all physical existence rests:

Although it seems that whatever is corporeal is real (*yesh*) while non-corporeal things (*ve-ha-ruḥaniyyut*) seem to lack reality (*she-eyn bo mamash*), all this falsehood is (only) from our point of view. For we are material creatures and constantly concerned with corporeality. But, in truth, it is the opposite. For the spiritual sustains the physical, and without it, the physical would be nothing. Now that spiritual force (*ruḥaniyyut*) which is not in a body is greater in quantity and power than that which is in a body. For the *ruḥaniyyut* in the body is exhausted by the presence of its opposite, which is corporeality. This is why a person's power of speech is more effective than his power of action. For it extends beyond human corporeality and becomes a spiritual force without a body. . . . Therefore, how much more so in the case of thought, which is more spiritual. It possesses more and greater power. As we know, in thought a person can reflect on his wisdom. All the work that he does in the world can be contained in his thought. For it is a power which is higher than the body. It begins in the body and continues beyond it in every place where a person wishes to extend it.

Rabbi Meshullam Feibush, Yosher Divrei Emet 34, YDEF; cf. in UHEH p.133

See also: **hamshakhat ha-maḥshavah.**

1. Isaac of Akko, *Sefer Oẓar Ḥayyim*, SOHI fol.1a; cf. in HEMI p.157.
2. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism*, HEMI p.157.
3. Rabbi Simeon ibn Lavi, *Ketem Paz*, KPSL, in TKLH.
4. Cf. Miles Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven and Earth*, UHEH p.82.
5. Miles Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven and Earth*, UHEH p.82.

6. *I.e.* Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* ('Orchard of Pomegranates').
7. He means *Sha'ar ha-Shamayyim* ('Gate of Heaven' rather than 'Gates of Heaven').

rūpa-jhāna (Pa) *Lit.* meditative absorption (*jhāna*) in the realms of form (*rūpa*); the four stages of *jhāna* experienced in the four realms of *rūpaloka* (realm of forms, patterns, or archetypes). According to Buddhist cosmology, *kāmaloka* (realm of desire) consists of eleven realms, which include the hellish, animal, human, and lower heavenly realms; *rūpaloka* has sixteen subdivisions, of which the upper five are accessible only to *arahantas* (enlightened ones) and *anāgāmis* (non-returns, who have escaped rebirth); and *arūpaloka* consists of four realms. *Rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* would seem to be equivalent to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology. See **arūpāyatana**, **jhāna**.

sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā (Pa) *Lit.* reflection (*saññā*) on not taking delight in (*anabhirata*) the entire (*sabba*) world (*loka*); meditation or contemplation on dissatisfaction, disinterest, or distaste regarding the whole world; a practice intended to generate aversion towards all delight in and enjoyment of the world of phenomena, founded on the perception or awareness (*saññā*) that attachment to pleasure and delight in the things of the physical senses is the primary reason for suffering, and for imprisonment in the cycle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*).

In the *Girimānanda Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha lists *sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā* as one of ten meditation subjects intended to detach a monk from the body, the senses, and the illusory world. These are awareness of: impermanence (*anicca*); absence of a permanent self or identity (*anattā*); repulsiveness (*asubha*) of the body; danger (*ādīnava*); abandoning or giving up (*pahāna*); dispassion or detachment (*virāga*); cessation (*nirodha*); disinterest in the whole world (*sabbaloke anabhirata*); impermanence (*anicca*) of all relative phenomena; and mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*).¹ The Buddha explains how *sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā* is one of these means:

What is reflection on disinterest for the entire world (*sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā*)? Herein, by abandoning any concern for and clinging to this world, by relinquishing mental prejudices, wrong beliefs, and latent tendencies concerning this world, by not grasping them, but by giving them up, a monk becomes detached. This is called reflection on disinterest regarding the whole world (*sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā*).

Anguttara Nikāya 10:60, *Girimānanda Sutta*, PTSA5 p.111; cf. ANPT, NDBB p.1413

In the *Sabba Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* the Buddha explains what he means by ‘entire’ or ‘all’:

Monks, I will teach you what is meant by the ‘all (*sabba*)’. Listen and pay close attention. . . . What is the ‘all’? Simply the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and aromas, the tongue and flavours, the body and tactile objects, the mind (*mana*) and aspects of the mind. That is called the ‘all (*sabba*)’.

Samyutta Nikāya 35:23, Sabba Sutta, PTSS4 p.15; cf. CDBB p.1140, SNTB

He then adds that all things of the senses are to be given up or “abandoned”. Of the eyes and things seen, he says:

The eye is to be abandoned, forms are to be abandoned, eye-consciousness is to be abandoned, eye-contact is to be abandoned, and whatever arises that is dependent on eye-contact – whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant – that too is to be abandoned.

Samyutta Nikāya 35:24, Pahāna Sutta, PTSS4 pp.15–16; cf. CDBB p.1140, SNTB

Similarly, for the ears and sounds, nose and aromas, tongue and tastes, the body and touch, and the mind and its aspects.²

See also: **āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā, asubha bhāvanā.**

1. *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:60, *Girimānanda Sutta*, PTSA5 p.109.
2. *Samyutta Nikāya* 35:24, *Pahāna Sutta*, PTSS4 pp.15–16.

sacred pipe *Lit.* a sacred pipe, a ceremonial pipe; used by a number of Native American traditions as a ritual object to seal a personal commitment or an agreement with others, or smoked during the opening or course of a religious or social ceremony such as an altar ceremony, the sun dance, or an *inipi* (sweat lodge). The smoke from the sacred pipe is believed to convey prayers to *Wakan-Tanka* (Lakota, Great Spirit), also known as *Tunkashila* (Lakota, Grandfather), or to other spirits who work with Him, such as the Persons of the four cardinal directions. A number of legends are told in the different tribal nations concerning the origin of the sacred pipe. Some are given as gifts at the time of creation or otherwise appear in creation stories; others are bestowed for healing purposes. Archaeological evidence indicates that pipes have been used among Native Americans for at least 4,000 years.

Among the many Native American nations, numerous terms are used for the sacred pipe, such as the Lakota *chanunpa wakan* (sacred pipe). The particular ceremonial occasions on which a sacred pipe is smoked, the way it is

used, and the substances smoked also vary from nation to nation. Sacred pipes are variously carved, painted and decorated with a variety of items, which have either a symbolic or personal significance, or both. The *chanunpa* was inaccurately referred to by white people as a peace pipe because the chiefs would always smoke the pipe after a treaty had been signed. The smoke from the pipe was offered to *Tunkashila* to receive blessings on the agreement. Since this was the only time that the white people saw the pipe being used, they began to call it a ‘peace pipe’.

It is difficult to convey the sense of sacredness with which the sacred pipe is imbued in the minds of Native Americans. The Lakota high ceremonial chief Noble Red Man (1902–1989) is trying to explain it when he says:

The peace pipe is our greatest weapon. It’s our holy power. It’s God’s power. The pipe mediates between human beings and God. To receive the pipe, to receive God’s gift, you’ve got to be pure in your heart, mind, body, and soul. And never forget that after the prayers are over you’ve got to live that life – a life with God. That’s the hardest part. . . .

You’ve got your holy Bible and we’ve got our sacred pipe. Maybe God wants there to be both a Bible and a pipe. We’re not trying to convert you, and we don’t want you to try to convert us. We only want our two peoples to live together in peace and mutual respect, each of us serving God in our way. Isn’t that acceptable to the white man? We don’t condemn all white people. There are many good white people. They lead a good life. They don’t do evil to others. They live with God. We don’t hate anybody. Hating hurts the hater more than the one who’s hated. We have no hate in our hearts. We hope there’s none in yours. We open our hearts and our arms to you.

Noble Red Man, Lakota Wisdomkeeper Mathew King, NRMK pp.57, 84

The Lakota Sioux holy man John Lame Deer (1903–1976) also emphasizes this sense of sacredness:

This pipe is our most sacred possession. All our religion flows from it. The sacred pipe is at the heart of all our ceremonies, no matter how different they are from each other. Crying for a vision, suffering at the sun dance, in the darkness of a *yuwipi* night, in the sweat lodge, the pipe is always there, right at the core. It is as sacred to us as the holy bundle of arrows is to the Cheyennes. Even more sacred, because the arrow bundle is for Cheyennes only, while we hold the pipe on behalf of all the tribes of this turtle continent, on behalf of all living things upon this earth.

It is because of this sacredness that one should speak about the pipe at the very end (of this book), after everything else has been said. But

there is still another reason why I have waited so long to talk about the pipe. It scares me. If an Indian tries to talk about it, he is easily lost. Our minds are not good enough to understand all of it. It is so sacred that it makes me want not to tell all I know about it. No matter how old I am, how long I have thought about it, how much I have learned, I never feel quite ready to talk about the pipe. Sometimes I dream of our writing a book about nothing but the pipe, because all Indian wisdom can be known through the pipe. But, as I say, it scares me and overwhelms me with its greatness.

John Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions, LDSV pp.264–65

Leonard Crow Dog (b.1942), a Sicangu Lakota medicine man and spiritual leader, explains in greater detail:

The most sacred thing for us Lakota is the *chanunpa*, the holy pipe. The pipe and the Indian go together. They cannot be separated. The pipe, lifted up in prayer, forms a link between man and *Tunkashila*. It's a spiritual bridge to the Great Spirit. With that pipe I can communicate with *Tunkashila*, the Grandfather Spirit, whom we also call *Wakan-Tanka*, the great sacredness. With the pipe I let my mind fly through the air. The sacred pipe is a smoke signal to *Tunkashila*. The pipe is not a thing. It is alive. You can feel its power as you hold it, power from Ptesan Win, the White Buffalo Woman, who brought this great gift to us. Within the pipe dwells the power of *Wakan-Tanka*, male and female power. Man is the stem; woman is the bowl. . . .

When I speak of the pipe I speak with an ancient knowledge that lies within me. I was born before my father. By this I mean that my spirit was born hundreds of years ago. What my ancestors left, whatever the white man has not destroyed, I pick up and continue on. A man without a country, that's Mr Indian, but our spiritual country is still there, thanks to the pipe.

I had vision. It came from the morning star, a star whisper. I heard this voice saying, "Any understanding you ask from the morning star shall be granted you, but ask with the sacred things, the drum, the sacred tobacco, the sacred sweetgrass, and, above all, with the sacred pipe." Our dead sleep not. They tell me what I want to know. I have the power to see through things. I have only limited vision with the eyes I have in my head, but with my spiritual eyes I can see across oceans. The pipe is here to unite us, to remove the fences people put up against one another. Putting up fences is the white man's way. He invented the barbed wire, the barbed wire of the heart. The pipe is a fence remover. Sitting in a circle, smoking it the right way, all barriers disappear. Walls crumble.

Leonard Crow Dog, Four Generations of Sioux Holy Men, FGSM pp.133–34

Crow Dog goes on to relate a legend concerning a deluge that had once threatened the ancient people's existence:

The pipe is us. *Inyan sha*, the red pipestone, is our flesh and blood. The stem is our spine; the bowl is our head; the smoke rising from it is *Tunkashila's* breath. There is an old story handed down from grandparent to grandchild, generation after generation. It is the story of a great flood that carried everything before it. The people fled to the top of high mountains, but even there the rising waters swept over them. Their flesh and blood turned to stone, the red pipestone. Only one young woman survived. An eagle carried her to the top of a tree on the highest cliff above the water. The young woman had twins, a boy and a girl, the eagle's children. These twins are the ancestors of our Lakota nation.

Leonard Crow Dog, Four Generations of Sioux Holy Men, FGSM p.134

He also speaks of the place where the red mudstone from which the sacred pipes are made is found:

The sacred red stone occurs at only one spot in the whole world, at a quarry in western Minnesota. In the old days this was a sacred ground, not only to the Sioux but to many other tribes who came there to get the red stone for their pipes. At that place even bitter enemies became friends, digging the stone side by side. Among whites the stone is known as catlinite, after the painter George Catlin, the first white man to visit the quarry, way back in 1837. The sacred stone forms a long band sandwiched between layers of other kinds of rock. I have been there many times to dig out the *inyan sha*. There is little of it left and one must dig deeper and deeper to get at it, even dig under the water that covers the quarry's bottom.

Leonard Crow Dog, Four Generations of Sioux Holy Men, FGSM pp.134–35

Minnesota pipestone or catlinite is a red, metamorphosed mudstone, formed of highly compressed particles, which makes it smooth and easy to work and cut, even with a knife. There are other forms of pipestone, which are also used by different Native American groups. Generally, the bowl of the sacred pipe is carved out of the clay, to which a wooden stem is fitted. The two parts are kept separate, only being joined together for use in ceremonies. Pipes moulded entirely out of wet clay are used for social smoking.

"Ptesan Win, the sacred White Buffalo Woman" is the one who, according to a Lakota legend, gave the Lakota their first sacred pipe and taught them how to use it. Crow Dog relates the story:

It was Ptesan Win, the sacred White Buffalo Woman, who made our people holy and taught them how to live. She was the spirit of *waonshila*, mercifulness. She was grace. She was beauty. When she appeared, the people were starving. There was no game and nothing to eat. The chiefs sent out two young hunters to look for game. But these scouts found nothing. They saw neither buffalo nor deer. Then the *winyan wakan*, the woman sacredness, appeared to them in the morning. Ptesan Win came out of a cloud. The cloud turned into a hill. Ptesan Win walked the hill in the shape of a white buffalo calf who turned into a beautiful maiden dressed in white buckskin. In her hands she carried sage and her great gift to our people, *chanunpa*, the sacred pipe. Four days before she appeared, the hunters had foreseen her coming in a dream.

The sacred woman spoke to these two young men: "Go back to your people. Tell them to get ready to receive me, to prepare the sacred *tipi*. Prepare the sacred sweat lodge. Do all these things. You already have the fire, *peta owihankeshni*, the fire without end. Light this fire for me. *Igluha* – act well. Perform all I told you. In four days I will come to your camp."

The young men treated Ptesan Win with awe and respect. They honoured her. They went back to their village without meat, but bringing with them spiritual food. Their nourishment was the wind, and it filled up the people's bellies as if they had eaten buffalo hump. And the hunters told their chiefs, who ordered everything prepared for Ptesan Win's coming. The people at that time were not what they became. The men knew a little about hunting. They had stone axes and wooden spears whose sharpened points were hardened in fire. They hunted the mammoth and other animals that have long since died out. They killed mammoths and buffalo by chasing them with burning branches over high cliffs to fall to their deaths. The women gathered wild fruits. The people's language was still rude. They did not know how to pray. They did not even know that there was a *Tunkashila*, a Grandfather Spirit, the Creator.

At daybreak, just as the sun rose, the sacred woman arrived at the camp, as she had promised the two young scouts. She wore her hair loose on the right and tied with buffalo hair on the left. She was carrying the sacred pipe, carrying the stem in her left hand and the bowl in her right. As she approached she was singing her song:

With visible breath,
I am walking.
Toward this nation,
I am walking.

Her voice was sweet, and the men, women and children who had assembled to greet and honour her saw that she was beautiful beyond words. Besides the *chanunpa*, she carried a sacred stone into which seven circles had been carved. These circles represented the seven sacred rituals of the Lakota nation. She brought with her *chanshasha*, red willow bark tobacco. The chief led her inside the sacred lodge, where sage had been spread to sit on at the place of honour. The chief's name was Tatanka Woslal Nazin, or Buffalo Standing Upward.

Ptesan Win told the people that she had been sent by the Buffalo Nation to instruct them in the ways of *Wakan-Tanka*, the Creator, whom she also called *Tunkashila*, the Grandfather Spirit. She taught them how to use the sacred pipe and how to pray with it. She taught them the sacred songs. She taught them how to perform the seven great ceremonies. She instructed them how to make offerings to *Wakan-Tanka*. She told the men to protect and nourish their women and children, to be kind to them and to share their wives' sorrows. She told the women that without them there would be no life. She taught them the manner in which to bear children, how to do quillwork, and to stay away from men and sacred things during their moon time. She taught the people how to live like human beings, how to put things together, and to understand *Tunkashila*'s holy ways. She made the Lakota into the people of the sacred pipe.

After she had done all this, the woman took leave of the people, promising to return after four years. As she walked away, the people saw her turning into a *ptesan ska win*, a white buffalo calf, and also into a *tahca win*, a deer woman, and a *hehaka win*, an elk woman. They also say that she turned herself into buffalo of four different colours – black, dark brown, light yellow-brown, and finally white – as she disappeared into the clouds. The Creator had given her the power to carry the pipe to the Lakota people. She was a sacred woman, a spirit of the spirit.

When the descendants of Chief Tatanka Woslal Nazin had died out, the pipe was passed on to Chief Hehaka Pa, Chief Elk Head. The Elk Heads were the pipe's keepers for generations. After that the pipe passed to the Looking Horse family at Eagle Butte, on the Cheyenne River reservation in South Dakota. The present keeper is Arvol Looking Horse (b.1954). The sacred pipe is made from a buffalo calf's leg bone. Age has made it so brittle that it can no longer be smoked, but when you touch it, power flows into you like an electric current. The power is so strong that you burst into tears.

Now here is something that has never been told. The way they tell the story of Ptesan Win today, when this sacred woman appeared to the two young hunters one of them had impure thoughts and stretched out his hands to touch her, to possess her body. Lightning struck him

and burned him up until only a little heap of bones and ashes was left. But this is not true. Both young men were respectful of Ptesan Win. Nobody was burned up. This untrue story was made up a hundred years ago by missionaries who always tried to make our beliefs look savage and nasty. When they put the story into books, everybody started to repeat it this way. That's one kind of religious genocide.

Leonard Crow Dog, Four Generations of Sioux Holy Men, FGSM pp.2–5

Wallace Black Elk (1921–2004), a pupil and spiritual descendant of the Black Elk whose visions are recorded in *Black Elk Speaks*, refers to this story when he too speaks of the power lodged in the original sacred pipe:

That *chanunpa* was first brought to us by the white Buffalo-Calf Maiden. We still carry that original *chanunpa*. Arvol Looking Horse is the keeper of that *chanunpa*. That *chanunpa* is like a radio, like a radar. You could communicate from here directly to that main *chanunpa*. You could communicate directly with that wisdom. Like I said, *Tunkashila* is the wisdom itself, and Grandmother is the knowledge.

Wallace Black Elk, Sacred Ways of a Lakota, BESW p.51

The American anthropologist, naturalist and historian George Grinnell (1849–1938) records the experience of a correspondent who had been present at a sacred pipe ceremony, which had been held for healing purposes:

In 1879, Mr Schultz saw a sacred pipe unwrapped for the benefit of a sick woman, and on various occasions since he has been present at this ceremony. All accounts of what takes place agree so closely with what I saw that I give only one of them. Mr Schultz wrote me of the first occasion: “When I entered the lodge, it was already well filled with men who had been invited to participate in the ceremony. The medicine man was aged and grey-headed, and his feeble limbs could scarcely support his body. Between him and his wife was the bundle which contained the medicine pipe, as yet unwrapped, lying on a carefully folded buffalo robe. Plates of food were placed before each guest, and after all had finished eating, and a common pipe had been lighted to be smoked around the circle, the ceremony began.

“With wooden tongs, the woman took a large coal from the fire, and laid it on the ground in front of the sacred stem. Then, while everyone joined in singing a chant, a song of the buffalo (without words), she took a bunch of dried sweet grass, and, raising and lowering her hand in time to the music, finally placed the grass on the burning coals. As the thin column of perfumed smoke rose from the burning herb, both she and the medicine man grasped handfuls of it and rubbed it over

their persons, to purify themselves before touching the sacred roll. They also took each a small piece of some root from a little pouch, and ate it, signifying that they purified themselves without and within.

“The man and woman now faced each other and again began the buffalo song, keeping time by touching with the clenched hands – the right and left alternately – the wrappings of the pipe, occasionally making the sign for buffalo. Now, too, one could occasionally hear the word *nai-ai*’ (my shelter, my covering, my robe) in the song. After singing this song for about ten minutes, it was changed to the antelope song, and, instead of touching the roll with the clenched hands, which represented the heavy tread of buffalo, they closed the hands, leaving the index finger extended and the thumbs partly open, and in time to the music, as in the previous song, alternately touched the wrappers with the tips of the left and right forefinger, the motions being quick and firm, and occasionally brought the hands to the side of the head, making the sign for antelope, and at the same time uttering a loud *’kuh*’ to represent the whistling or snorting of that animal.

“At the conclusion of this song, the woman put another bunch of sweet grass on a coal, and carefully undid the wrappings of the pipe, holding each one over the smoke to keep it pure. When the last wrapping was removed, the man gently grasped the stem and, everyone beginning the pipe song, he raised and lowered it several times, shaking it as he did so, until every feather and bit of fur and scalp hung loose and could be plainly seen.

“At this moment the sick woman entered the lodge, and with great difficulty, for she was very weak, walked over to the medicine woman and knelt down before her. The medicine woman then produced a small bag of red paint, and painted a broad band across the sick woman’s forehead, a stripe down the nose, and a number of round dots on each cheek. Then picking up the pipe stem, which the man had laid down, she held it up toward the sky and prayed, saying, ‘Listen, Sun, pity us! Listen, Old Man, pity us! Above People, pity us! Under Water People, pity us! Listen, Sun! Listen, Sun! Let us survive, pity us! Let us survive. Look down on our sick daughter this day. Pity her and give her a complete life.’ At the conclusion of this short prayer, all the people uttered a loud *’m-m-m-h*’, signifying that they took the words to their hearts. Everyone now commenced the pipe song, and the medicine woman passed the stem over different parts of the sick woman’s body, after which she rose and left the lodge.

“The medicine man now took a common pipe which had been lighted, and blew four whiffs of smoke toward the sky, four toward the ground, and four on the medicine pipe stem, and prayed to the Sun, Old Man, and all medicine animals, to pity the people and give them

long life. The drums were then produced, the war song commenced, and the old man, with a rattle in each hand, danced four times to the doorway and back. He stooped slightly, kept all his limbs very rigid, extending his arms like one giving a benediction, and danced in time to the drumming and singing with quick, sudden steps. This is the medicine pipe dance, which no one but a pipe owner is allowed to perform. Afterward, he picked up the pipe stem, and, holding it aloft in front of him, went through the same performance. At the conclusion of the dance, the pipe stem was passed from one to another of the guests, and each one in turn held it aloft and repeated a short prayer. The man on my right prayed for the health of his children, the one on my left for success in a proposed war expedition. This concluded the ceremony.”

George Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, BTGG pp.279–81

Grinnell provides no further details as to whether or not the sick woman was healed.

See also: **sun dance, sweat lodge.**

sahaj yoga (H/Pu), **sahj jog** (Pu) *Lit.* natural, easy or peaceful (*sahaj*) way, path or practice (*yoga*); from *saha* (with) + *ja* (born), *i.e.* born with, inborn; the *yoga* of the divine Name (*Nām*) or Sound (*Shabd*); also called *surat Shabd yoga*, the *yoga* of the Sound Current.

The term *sahaj yoga* has been used by a number of Indian *sants*, and is commonly linked to Kabīr (c. 1398–1518), though he speaks of *sahaj* or *sahaj samādhi* rather than *sahaj yoga*.¹ Other *sants* have also indicated that *sahaj yoga* refers to the path of the divine Sound or Name (*Nām*), obtainable from a *satguru*:

When one cultivates the true Sound
through the practice of *sahaj yoga*,
then the soul (*surat*) comprehends the unwritten *Nām*.

Dariyā Sāhib, Brahm bibek, Chaupāī 41, DG2 p.332, DSSK p.53

Let the *guru*’s Word (*Sabad*) be the earrings in your mind,
and wear the patched coat of tolerance.

Whatever the Lord does, look upon that as good:
thus you shall obtain the treasure of *sahj yoga*.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 359, AGK

Uniting with the *guru*,
the mortal conquers and subdues his mind.

Day and night,
 he savours the *yoga* of devotional worship (*bhagat jog*).
 Associating with the *guru*-saint (*gur sant*),
 suffering and sickness are ended.
 Servant Nānak merges with his husband Lord in *sahaj yoga*.
Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1170, AGK

See also: **sahaja** (8.1), **surat Shabd**.

1. E.g. Kabīr, *Shabdāvalī* 1, *Virah aur prem*, *Shabd* 30, *KSSI* p.16.

samādhi-samāpatti-kusalatā (Pa) *Lit.* skilfulness (*kusalatā*) in attainment (*samāpatti*) of meditation (*samādhi*); the ability to enter into meditation at will; appears in the *Jhāna Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* together with *samādhi-ṭhiti-kusalatā* and *samādhi-vuṭṭhāna-kusalatā*, which refer respectively to firm establishment (*ṭhiti*) in *samādhi*, remaining in it at will for a predetermined length of time, and emerging (*vuṭṭhāna*) from it whenever one pleases.¹ *Ṭhiti* implies ‘stability’, ‘duration’, and ‘continuance’; *vuṭṭhāna* means ‘arising’ or ‘emerging’. The Buddha says that the best kind of meditator is one who is skilled in all three, that is, one who has mastered all three aspects of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* seems to be used here as equivalent to *jhāna* (contemplative absorption), and the three terms are equivalent to the second, third and fourth of the five masteries (*vasī*) described in the analytical systematization of the *Abhidhamma*.

See also: **vasī**.

1. *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 34.1–12, *Jhāna Saṃyutta*, *PTSS3* pp.264–69.

samādhi-ṭhiti-kusalatā (Pa) *Lit.* skilfulness (*kusalatā*) in firm establishment (*ṭhiti*) in meditation (*samādhi*), remaining in it at will for a predetermined length of time. *Ṭhiti* implies ‘stability’, ‘duration’, and ‘continuance’. See **samādhi-samāpatti-kusalatā**.

samādhi-vuṭṭhāna-kusalatā (Pa) *Lit.* skilfulness (*kusalatā*) in emerging (*ṭhiti*) from meditation (*samādhi*). See **samādhi-samāpatti-kusalatā**.

samatha (Pa), **shamatha** (S), **zhi gnas** (T), **jì, zhǐ** (C), **jaku, shi** (J) *Lit.* serenity, tranquillity, calmness, quiescence; calm (*zhi*) state (*gnas*); quietude of mind;

absence of passion and uncontrolled thoughts; in the Pali Buddhist *suttas*, generally twinned with *vipassanā* (penetrating insight into the true nature of materio-mental things or phenomena as they arise and disappear).

Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are depicted in the *suttas* as part of the fruits of meditation that automatically arise on the path to enlightenment (*bodhi*). They are also regarded as essential for the elimination of various human imperfections and the attainment of *nibbāna*.

Samatha is developed and practised by concentrating the attention (by meditating) on one of the forty classical themes and objects (*kammaṭṭhānas*) of contemplation, which are listed in the analytical *Abhidhamma* and associated literature. A meditator, with the help of a teacher, is assigned a subject suitable to his temperament. The practitioner then focuses on the chosen subject or object, forming a mental image (*nimitta*) of it in his mind. As concentration (*samādhi*) develops, the mental image first appears as a near-perfect representation, *i.e.* as an acquired or learned image (*uggaha nimitta*); then, with deepening concentration, the mental image becomes a self-luminous counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*), abstracted in form from the original lifelike image. As the practice continues, an increasing degree of concentration and *samatha* is experienced, and the meditator attains entry to the first *jhāna*. While any of the forty subjects or objects can be used for concentration, beginners generally start with mindfulness of the in-and-out breath, perhaps focusing upon the rise and fall of the abdomen. This is one of the most natural and most readily available ‘objects’, having the advantage of being with a meditator wherever he may go.¹

See also: **vipassanā**.

1. For full consideration of *samatha*, see **vipassanā**.

samaya-mudrā (S), **dam tshig gi phyag rgya** (T), **sānmóyé yìn** (C) *Lit.* a seal or symbol (*mudrā*, *phyag rgya*, *yìn*) of a pledge or commitment (*samaya*, *dam tshig gi*); a seal or stamp of the vow or commitment; in Tibetan Buddhism, one of four seals of *anuttara-yoga tantra*. See **mahāmudrā**.

samaya-sattva (S), **dam tshig sems dpa'** (T) *Lit.* pledge (*samaya*, *dam tshig*) being (*sattva*, *sems dpa'*); symbolic being, imagined being; in later Tibetan tantric Buddhism, the visualized mental image of a meditation deity (*yi dam*) conjured up in the mind of a practitioner and used as a focus for worship and concentration; an aspect of *devatā yoga* (deity yoga). *Samaya* also means a promise, covenant, or commitment; *sattva*, in this context, means a being, an entity, or deity.

The *samaya-sattva* is contrasted with the pristine awareness, knowledge or wisdom being or deity (*jñāna-sattva*), who is called upon by the practitioner through prayer, meditation, *mantras* and so on to vitalize and merge with his *samaya-sattva*. The *jñāna-sattva* is understood as the real or true form of the deity, which merges with the practitioner's imagined form – the *samaya-sattva*. The practitioner then becomes one with the deity and imbibes its qualities and attributes. Ritualistic tantric *sādhana*s (spiritual practices) often include a point at which the *jñāna-sattva* 'descends' and merges with the *samaya-sattva*. At this point, the practitioner merges with the *yi dam*, and it is said that the *yi dam* has 'really' appeared.

The practice is also known as *utpatti-krama* (generation stage), which refers to a category of meditative practices in which the practitioner consciously visualizes, imagines or mentally fabricates one of the celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* or other tutelary deities (*yi dam*) either in front of himself (front generation) or as himself (self generation) as a means of spiritual transformation. It is because the meditator himself generates the *samaya-sattva* in his own mind that these initial exercises are called *utpatti-krama*. In this way of describing the practice, the merging of the *samaya-sattva* and *jñāna-sattva* are understood to be a part of *utpatti-krama*, while the complete merging of the practitioner with the *yi dam* is known as the *nishpanna-krama* (completion or perfection stage).

There are also additional divisions and variations among the various tantric schools and lineages concerning these practices,¹ as, for instance, those advocated by the *Kālachakra Tantra*. *Kālachakra* ('Wheel of Time') refers both to the tantric teachings and to the twenty-four armed *yi dam* or central deity of the school, who – as the personification of time – is omniscient and represents enlightenment. The ritual practices involve the use of various implements, in this case an *ankusha* (goad), a *vajra* (an ornate club), a hand bell (*ghaṇṭā*), and a *pāsha* (rope):

The deities whom you have visualized are, at this point, your thought constructions, imagined deities called 'pledge beings (*samaya-sattva*)'. You now call in the real deities, called 'primordial wisdom beings (*jñāna-sattva*)', to merge with and vitalize the imagined deities. You do this with the *mantra*, *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ*. With the sound *jaḥ*, you 'invite (*āvāhana*)' or 'draw in (*ākarṣaṇa*)' the primordial wisdom beings. For this, an implement that you as *Kālachakra* hold in one of your twenty-four hands is employed – the *ankusha*. An *ankusha* is an elephant goad. The only thing comparable to this found in Western countries is a cattle prod. But an *ankusha* not only has a point at the end, like a prod, it also has a hook near this pointed end. So the elephant can either be prodded forward with the pointed end, or pulled

back with the hook. The use of this hooked goad when inviting the primordial wisdom beings makes the invitation, shall we say, more compelling.

Next, the invited primordial wisdom beings or real deities are caused to enter (*praveshana*) the pledge beings or imagined deities with the sound *hūṃ*. For this, another of the implements held in your many hands is employed, the *vajra*. Then they are bound (*bandhana*) there with the sound *vaṃ*. For this, the rope (*pāsha*) you hold is employed. Lastly, with the sound *hoḥ*, you cause them to be satisfied (*toshana*) in their new situation. For this, your bell (*ghaṇṭā*) with its pleasing sound is employed. This four-syllable *mantra*, *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ*, is used throughout Buddhist tantric practice, whenever the primordial wisdom beings are merged with the pledge beings.

David Keigle, “Sanskrit Mantras in the *Kālachakra Sādhana*,” in *ALSE* p.307

Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987), on the other hand, explains that the visualized image (*samaya-sattva*) of the *yi dam* is an expression of the practitioner’s commitment of his body, speech and mind to his *guru*, to the teachings, and to trust in the inherent, pristine, non-dual awareness or consciousness (*sems*) that underlies all things. Although the *jñāna-sattva* is often presented simplistically as the real form of the *yi dam*, Trungpa, speaking to a Western audience, explains that it actually represents a higher level of enlightened being:

Having visualized the *samaya-sattvas* of basic being, one invites what is known as *jñāna-sattva*. The *jñāna-sattva* is another level of being or experience. *Jñāna* is a state of wakefulness or openness, whereas *samaya* is an experience of bondage, of being solidly grounded in one’s experience. *Jñāna* literally means ‘wisdom’ or, more accurately, ‘being wise’. One invites this state of wisdom, this level of wakefulness, into one’s own imperfect visualization, so that the visualization comes alive with a feeling of openness and humour.

Chögyam Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha*, HBCT p.160

The *samaya-sattva* is understood as an image conjured up out of the emptiness (S. *shūnyatā*, T. *stong pa nyid*) of the non-dual state of the infinite, pristine mind or awareness, according to the understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. This *utpatti-krama* leads on to the *nishpanna-krama* (completion stage), which refers to a category of meditative practices in which the practitioner tries to realize the essential emptiness of all phenomena – mental or material. An advanced practitioner begins the practice by merging himself into the primal *shūnyatā* of things, before remanifesting or emerging as the imagined *samaya-sattva*:

At the commencement of *sādhana* (meditation practice), this empirical ego, as well as one's ordinary perception of one's immediate environment, is dissolved into the state of emptiness or *shūnyatā*. Then, in this state of imageless contemplation, which is characterized by both emptiness and luminosity, one remanifests oneself in a purified divine form known as the symbolic being or *samaya-sattva*. It is into this purified vessel that the higher energies of power and inspiration emanating from one's inherent enlightened *buddha*-nature are invoked out of the infinite sky of the mind, descending into this purified form of the *samaya-sattva*, which has been constructed and visualized by the activity of the mind.

These energies of inspiration or blessings present themselves in specific forms known as the *jñāna-sattvas*, or knowledge beings (*ye shes sems dpa'*). Thereupon these two, the symbolic being and the knowledge being, merge into a unity, becoming one and inseparable. One then develops a sense of identity of actually being this unitary entity for the duration of the *sādhana* practice. And because of this sense of identity or divine pride, all of the powers and potentialities of this divine manifestation or god form are actualized in one's experience. At least, this is the case for the adept or *mahāsiddha*.

John Reynolds, Golden Letters, GLTS p.346 (n.9)

When attempting to express Eastern mystical concepts and practices in Western language there are many times when words prove inadequate. This is true when trying to describe any mystical experience, but it is even more so when dealing with the complex and deeply esoteric matters concerning tantric teaching and practice. As in so many matters, only experience can bring full understanding.

See also: **ishṭa-deva, utpatti-krama.**

1. See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought, BTIT* p.230.

sāmāyik(a) (S/H), **samatā** (S/Pk) *Lit.* serenity, tranquillity, equanimity; equality, harmony; inner balance of mind, leading to balanced and constantly aware outer conduct; peace of mind; remaining calm and undisturbed; the cultivation of equanimity whatever the circumstances, and of goodwill towards and equal treatment of all living beings; also, meditation, spiritual practice, without which the attainment of *moksha* (liberation) is not possible; also, in a general sense, any rite that brings peace and equipoise; regarded as the essence of Jain practice; a Jain term used in two contexts.

Firstly, according to a *Shvetāmbara* text, the *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*, *sāmāyika-chāritra* (serenity conduct) is a great vow (*mahāvratā*) of restraint taken by Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth *Tīrthankara*, when he renounced the life of a householder. According to a *Digambara* text, the *Mūlachāra*, a vow known as *sāmāyika-saṃyama* (serenity restraint) – which entails abstention from all acts that would cause harm to other living beings – is said to have been taken by all twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* except Ṛishabha (the first) and Mahāvīra, who are believed to have taught the five *mahāvratas* (great vows). In general, these two vows cover the living of a pure life in tandem with spiritual and religious practices.

In present times, mendicants vow to exercise restraint at all times by constant awareness of their actions and attention to following the five *mahāvratas*. The *sāmāyika-vrata* (*sāmāyika* vow) of the laity is expressed in a traditional formula:

I engage, lord, in the *sāmāyika*, renouncing (*pratyākhyāna*) – for as long as I worship the monks (*sādhus*) – harmful activities whether doing them or causing them to be done by others; neither with mind, speech nor body will I do them or cause them to be done by others; I confess them, lord, and reprehend and repent of them (*pratikramaṇa*), and I cast aside my past self.

Sāmāyika Sūtra; cf. in *JYMS* p.132

Secondly, *sāmāyika* is one of the six *āvashyakas*, the obligatory rites and practices of a mendicant, as well as one of the four *śikshā-vratas* (training vows) of a layperson. Having taken the *sāmāyika-vrata* the monk or layperson seeks inner serenity by devoting a particular time or times every day to detaching the senses from material things, to awareness of his own inner being, and to seeking oneness with the higher self:

Sāmāyika is being established in one's true self, whose glory is nothing but that pure gnosis and knowledge that are attained by total destruction of the array of delusions. By completely relinquishing bad actions of every type, you will become the embodiment of *sāmāyika*.

Amṛitachandra, Laghu-tattva Sphoṭa (52) 3:2; cf. *ALTS* p.21

Although advice as to frequency varies among some of the Jain texts,¹ the commonest advice is for mendicant monks to practise *sāmāyika* three times daily – at sunrise, midday, and sunset. Laypeople who practise in this manner are said to have reached *sāmāyika pratimā*, the third *pratimā* (lay stage of renunciation). Some of the older *Shvetāmbara* texts, however, advise that *sāmāyika* should be practised as often as possible.²

The details of the practice vary between different Jain traditions, but in general the practitioner refrains from actions that will cause harm to other living beings, and engages in spiritual practices for a period of one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes). The place chosen for the practice is carefully inspected for all forms of life that may otherwise be unintentionally harmed, and some *Shvetāmbaras* also clean the area with a *rajoharaṇa* (whisk broom). The spiritual practices can include meditation, repetition of a *mantra*, listening to a spiritual discourse, and reading spiritual literature. They may also include others of the six *āvashyaka* rites, such as *vandana* (reverence of the holy ones), *pratikramaṇa* (confession) and *stuti* (praise, eulogy, adoration), also called *Chaturviṃshati Stava* ('Praise of the Twenty-Four').³

Sāmāyika can be performed sitting or standing (the *kāyotsarga* posture), in one's own home, a temple or a fasting hall (*poshadha-sālā*), in the presence of a monk (*sādhu*), or in any quiet and solitary location. Among older texts, the *Shvetāmbara*, *Shramaṇopāsaka-pratimā-pañchāshaka*, suggests communal *sāmāyika* in a *poshadha-sālā*. Among *Digambaras*, Kārttikeya recommends somewhere free from the disturbance of biting insects, the "babble of sounds (*kalayala*)", and the uproar of a crowded place. Samantabhadra favours the solitude of a forest clearing, a sanctuary, or one's own home. Vasunandin recommends a temple, one's home, or any peaceful place facing north or south. Āshādhara simply mentions solitude.⁴

Disturbances to the practice of *sāmāyika* are regarded as infringements (*atichāras*) of the vow. Five such *atichāras* are generally described, which are in fact common experience among all who attempt the practice of meditation, from whatever tradition they may come. It is only the vagaries of the lower mind that hinder the natural peace and serenity of the higher mind and the soul from manifesting; and it is this seemingly endless mental and emotional activity, and its underlying causes, that constitute the principle obstacles to meditation. The five *atichāras* mentioned by Jain *āchāryas* of the past, together with some of their interpretations, are:⁵

1. *Mano-dushpraṇidhāna*. Misapplication (*dushpraṇidhāna*) of mind (*manas*); thinking about domestic and worldly affairs; entertaining thoughts of anger, greed, deceit, pride, and envy; failure to surrender the mind to the practice.
2. *Vāg-dushpraṇidhāna*. Misapplication of speech (*vāch*); use of improper, deceitful, harsh, or hurtful language; speaking without discretion or consideration; confused and hesitant recitation of a *mantra* or scripture.
3. *Kāya-dushpraṇidhāna*. Misapplication of body (*kāya*); inability to remain still during the practice; movement of the hands, feet, and other

parts of the body during practice; failure to properly and carefully clean the floor and clothing, especially of small creatures, before attending to *sāmāyika*; performing unworthy, improper, or undesirable actions.

4. *Smṛity-akaraṇa*. Lack of practice (*akaraṇa*) of remembrance (*smṛiti*); forgetfulness or incorrect practice of *sāmāyika*; forgetting whether or not the practice has been performed, due to a state of total heedlessness; persistent negligence of spiritual practice; complete lack of concentration; a continuous state of mind, unlike *mano-dushpraṇidhāna*, which is only temporary.
5. *Anavasthita-karaṇa*. Unsteadiness (*anavasthita*) in the practice (*karaṇa*); failure to observe the proper rites before commencing the practice; giving up the practice after only a short time; ending the practice before the full time decided upon has elapsed; eating immediately after practice; lack of zeal for and application to the practice.

The greatest benefit is derived from *sāmāyika* when it is practised regularly, as a part of the natural routine of each day. In essence, *sāmāyika* is spiritual sustenance. Hence, a twentieth-century compilation, the *Samansuttam*, concludes, “an intelligent person ought to perform *sāmāyika* for the sake of his own welfare.”⁶

See also: **āvashyaka** (8.4).

1. E.g. Amṛitachandra, *Purushārtha-siddhyupāya* 149, PSAS; Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 5:29, SDAM; in JYMS pp.134–35.
2. E.g. Haribhadra, on *Āvashyaka Sūtra*, ASCH p.832b, in JYMS p.134.
3. See “*sāmāyika*,” A to Z of Jainism, AZJW.
4. Haribhadra, *Shramaṇopāsaka-pratimā-pañchāshaka* 12, SUPP; Kārttikeya, *Dvādashānuprekshā* 353, DAKU; Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrāvākāchāra* 4:9, RKSS; Vasunandin, *Shrāvākāchāra* 274, SCVJ; Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 5:28, SDAM; in JYMS p.135.
5. Haribhadra, on *Āvashyaka Sūtra*, ASCH p.834a–b; *Shrāvaka-prajñāpti* 313–14, SPAU; Pūjyapāda, *Sarvārthasiddhi*, on *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:33, TSSP; Siddhasena Gaṇin, on *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:28, TSCS; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chārītrasāra*, CSCM p.11; Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:116, YSHB p.577; Amṛitachandra, *Purushārtha-siddhyupāya* 191, PSAS; in JYMS pp.135–36.
6. *Samansuttam* 326; cf. SSJV.

sampajāna-kārī (Pa) *Lit.* being fully aware (*sampajāna*) of action (*kāra*); specifically, the second of the six Buddhist practices included in *kāyānupassanā*

(contemplation of the body), as described in the *Kāyagatāsati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*.¹ See **sampajañña**.

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), PTS2 p.292; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), PTSM1 p.57, PTSM3 p.90.

sampajañña (Pa), **samprajanya** (S), **shes bzhin** (T), **zhèngzhì** (C), **shōchi** (J) *Lit.* full (*sam*, *zhèng*) clear (*pa*) comprehension (*jañña*, *shes*, *zhì*); in Buddhism, clear comprehension, understanding or awareness, clarity of consciousness; full consciousness or awareness; circumspection, introspection, self-awareness; clearly aware, clearly conscious; full awareness and comprehension of body, actions, thoughts, and everything that passes through the mind; in meditation, the factor that observes when the attention has strayed from its focus; specifically, the second aspect of right mindfulness (*sammāsati*), which is the seventh aspect of the noble eightfold path; the second of the six Buddhist practices included in *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body), as described in the *Kāyagatāsati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*.¹

Sampajañña is commonly found in the Pali *suttas* in two compound forms, viz. *sati-sampajañña*, which means ‘mindfulness (*sati*) with full awareness (*sampajañña*)’ or ‘naked attention with full comprehension’, and *sampajāna-kārī*, which means ‘being fully aware (*sampajāna*) of action (*kāra*)’ or ‘action with full awareness’. It is used in a range of contexts, with a primary meaning of doing something with full awareness or consciousness, including such expressions as a “conscious lie (*sampajāna-musā*)”.²

Etymologically, *sampajañña* is constructed from *sam* (fully, clearly, correctly, rightfully), + *pa* (specially, distinctly), + *jañña* (knowing, realizing, being aware of). The meaning thus includes both full awareness and comprehension.

As a mindfulness practice, the variants of the term appear throughout the *suttas*. Speaking collectively of the four of the *satipaṭṭhānas* (foundations of mindfulness), and going on to describe *sampajañña* as the second form of contemplation of the body, the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* says:³

A monk abides contemplating body (*kāya*) as body, ardent, fully aware (*sampajāna*) and mindful (*satimā*), having put aside hankering and unhappiness regarding the world; he abides contemplating sensations (*vedanā*) as sensations, ... contemplating mind (*citta*) as mind ... contemplating mind-objects (*dhammas*) as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware (*sampajāna*) and mindful (*satimā*), having put aside hankering and unhappiness regarding the world. ...

A monk, when going forward or back, is fully aware of what he is doing (*sampajāna-kārī*); in looking forward or back, ... in bending

and stretching, . . . in carrying his inner and outer robe and his bowl, . . . in eating, drinking, chewing, and savouring, . . . in passing excrement or urine, . . . in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep and waking up, in speaking or in staying silent, he is fully aware of what he is doing (*sampajāna-kāṛī*).

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSD2 pp.290, 292; cf. TBLD pp.335, 337

The *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* adds:

Possessing this noble attribute of virtue, and this noble restraint of the faculties, and this noble mindfulness and full awareness (*sati-sampajañña*), he resorts to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground (*susāna*), a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.

Majjhima Nikāya 27, Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta, PTSM1 p.181; cf. MDBB p.274

The *Sangīti Sutta* outlines how mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness (*sampajañña*) develop from *samādhi bhāvanā* (cultivation of concentration):

This meditation (*samādhi bhāvanā*), when developed and expanded, leads to . . . mindfulness and full awareness (*sati-sampajañña*). . . . How does it lead to mindfulness and clear awareness (*sati-sampajañña*)? Here, a monk knows sensations (*vedanā*), . . . perceptions (*saññā*), . . . and thoughts (*vitakka*) as they arise, persist, and vanish.

Dīgha Nikāya 33, Sangīti Sutta, PTSD3 pp.222–23; cf. TBLD p.488

The Thai *Theravāda* monk Ajahn Chah (1918–1992) explains the benefit to spiritual practice of *sampajañña*, *sati* (mindfulness), and *paññā* (wisdom):

There must be both *sati* and *sampajañña*. *Sati* is recollection and *sampajañña* is self-awareness. Right now you are clearly aware of the breath. This exercise of watching the breath helps *sati* and *sampajañña* develop together. They share the work. Having both *sati* and *sampajañña* is like having two workers to lift a heavy plank of wood. Suppose there are two people trying to lift some heavy planks, but the weight is so great, they have to strain so hard, that it's almost unendurable. Then another person, imbued with goodwill, sees them and rushes in to help. In the same way, when there is *sati* and *sampajañña*, then *paññā* (wisdom) will arise at the same place to help out. Then all three of them support each other.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD pp.215–16

The term is the subject of elaboration in the analytical *Abhidhamma* (systematization of the Pali *suttas*) and associated literature, where it is analysed into four stages:⁴

1. *Sāttthaka-sampajañña*. Full awareness of purpose; clear comprehension of the purpose or intent of any action, spiritual or mundane, leading to action only after reflection, with a worthy purpose and good intention.
2. *Sappāya-sampajañña*. Full awareness of what is suitable or beneficial (*sappāya*); clear comprehension concerning the suitability of the means chosen for achieving one's purpose. Actions should be both beneficial and suitable. For example, *dharmā*-talks are beneficial to both speakers and listeners, but a crowded and noisy location is an unsuitable place to hold the meeting. Likewise, meditation on the repulsiveness of a corpse is beneficial, but not if the corpse chosen as the object of meditation is of the opposite gender, since that may encourage a more general descent into lustful thoughts. Having ascertained one's purpose, *sappāya-sampajañña* implies the selection of suitable means to achieve it.
3. *Gocara-sampajañña*. Full awareness of the object, domain (*gocara*), or sphere of reference; maintaining awareness of the object or subject of one's meditation, even when occupied with other activities during one's daily routine; preserving full awareness and comprehension of one's objective, whatever one is doing. A *gocara* is something's sphere of reference or the parameters that define and delimit it. Thus, form is the *gocara* of the eye; ideas and knowledge are the *gocara* of the mind. Hence, *gocara-sampajañña* means awareness of and giving focused attention to one's purpose. It follows naturally from awareness of one's purpose and determining suitable means of achieving it.
4. *Asammoha-sampajañña*. Full awareness concerning non-delusion (*asammoha*); clear and undeluded comprehension of the reality that everything is impermanent and that there is no real self or identity in oneself or anything else. Having considered one's purpose, determined suitable means of attaining it, and put the means into practice, *asammoha-sampajañña* refers to the awareness that, even so, actions and their fruits have no essential reality.

See also: **kāyagatāsati, sati, satipaṭṭhāna.**

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), *PTSD2* p.292; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), *PTSM1* p.57, *PTSM3* p.90.
2. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 25, *Udumbarika Sīhanāda Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.45; *Majjhima Nikāya* 114 *Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta*, *PTSM3* p.48.

3. See also, e.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16 (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), PTSD2 p.95; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 39 (*Mahā Assapura Sutta*), PTSM1 pp.56–57, 274; *Samyutta Nikāya* 47:2 (*Sati Sutta*), PTSS5 p.142.
4. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* *Ṭikā* 1:315ff.; see also, U Pandita, *On the Path to Freedom*, PFMP pp.83–87.

sampanna-krama (S) *Lit.* fulfilment or perfection (*sampanna*) stage (*krama*).
See **nishpanna-krama**.

sanghānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of the Buddhist community (*sangha*). See **anussati**.

sati (Pa), **smṛiti** (S), **dran pa** (T), **niàn** (C), **nen** (J) *Lit.* memory, remembrance, recollection, the power of retention and recall; mindfulness, awareness, attention, alertness; self-collectedness, conscious attention in the here and now; a fundamental principle in Buddhist philosophy and practice; an essential facet of both meditation and a virtuous life; an attitude of non-reactive, mindful observation and conscious activity; the capacity to concentrate the attention on a single object without distraction or forgetfulness, to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

Sati is the starting point of the seven factors (*bojjhanga*) that lead to enlightenment. As *sammāsati* (right mindfulness), it is the seventh essential of the noble eightfold path, which culminates in right concentration or meditation (*sammā-samādhi*). It is also the third of the five powers (*bala*) or mental faculties (*indriya*), and again precedes meditation (*samādhi*). In the *Sarvāstivāda* school of Sanskrit *Abhidharma*, *smṛiti* is one of a group of mental factors (*chaitta*) that assist the mind to ascertain the nature of something. It also appears in several other categorizations of the many aspects of mental function.

Sati is the essential ingredient of the many forms of mindfulness meditation. These include *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing), *marāṇasati* (mindfulness of death), and *kāyagatāsati* (mindfulness of the body). There is also the generic *anussati* (recollection), which itself designates several forms of meditation – *buddhānussati*, *dharmānussati*, *sanghānussati*, *silānussati*, *cāgānussati* or *dānānussati*, *devatānussati* and *upasamānussati*, these being, respectively, recollection of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* (Way, teachings), the *sangha* (Buddhist community), one's own virtue, generosity, the gods, and lastly the peace and stillness of *nibbāna*.

Sati is an integral aspect of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* (foundations of mindfulness), the four frames of reference or subjects for mindfulness described in the Pali Buddhist *suttas*. They consist of full and constant awareness of all

aspects of the body (*kāya*), sensations and sensory-mental feelings (*vedanās*), mind or consciousness (*citta*), and the *dhammas* (mental phenomena, things, and processes). Together, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* encompass awareness of all aspects of materio-mental existence.

Part of the purpose of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* is that full awareness and comprehension should become the motivating factors behind all activity of body and mind. Mindfulness is extended to individual activities, sensory input, thought and its subjects, the ultimate intention being to bring the mind to a state of stillness in which it contemplates nothing but the emptiness of itself. The process leads to a deep insight into the impermanence of everything in the material and mental spheres, into the suffering inherent in all transience, and into the nature of all things as devoid of any permanent identity.

The five powers (*bala*) or faculties (*indriya*) often enumerated in the Pali texts, of which *sati* is the third, are: faith (*saddhā*), effort or vigour (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The one leads to the other. Without faith in what one is doing, all effort is undermined; effort founded on faith results in mindfulness (*sati*), which leads on to deeper concentration (*samādhi*) in meditation; and meditation leads to true wisdom or gnosis. *Sati* provides balance to the other four faculties. It prevents the mental factors that underlie faith and wisdom from degenerating into blind unthinking credulity and doubt. It prevents effort from becoming restlessness, and concentration from gravitating towards boredom and indolence.

According to the *Indriya Vibhanga Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, *sati* includes a good memory as well as practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*:

Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties (*indriya*). What five? The faculty of faith (*saddhā*), the faculty of vigour (*virīya*), the faculty of mindfulness (*satindriya*), the faculty of concentration (*samādhi*), the faculty of wisdom (*paññā*). These are the five faculties. . . .

And what, *bhikkhus*, is the faculty of mindfulness (*satindriya*)? Here, *bhikkhus*, the noble disciple is mindful (*satimā*), possessing supreme mindfulness (*sati*) and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body (*kāya*) in the body, . . . sensations (*vedanā*) in sensations, . . . mind (*citta*) in mind, . . . phenomena (*dhamma*) in phenomena – ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful (*satimā*), having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness (*satindriya*).

Samyutta Nikāya 48:10, *Indriya Vibhanga Sutta*,
PTSS5 pp.197–98; cf. CDBB pp.1671–71

The passage underlines the close relationship between the two meanings of *sati* or *smṛiti* – memory and mindfulness. A good memory depends upon being

aware of what is happening in the present moment. In this way, good rather than confused memories are stored, permitting more accurate recall in the future. In Pali, ‘mindfulness’ is a more common meaning of *sati* than ‘memory’.

Mindfulness is the essential factor for successful meditation. It is like a craftsman who keeps his whole attention on the delicate task at hand, focused with one-pointed attention lest he make a mistake that ruins his efforts. It is like a tightrope walker or someone driving on a perilous mountain road, where one distracted glance can make the difference between life and death. In its broadest sense, mindfulness underlies all virtue and all good actions and behaviour. It is always positive, never negative. It prevents the ingress of negative thoughts and passions and stops the mind from running needlessly to sensory stimuli. It keeps the mind receptive and aware of the present moment.

Sati is active rather than passive. When *sati* is in control, then it helps other mental functions to operate coherently and with purpose. The Thai *Theravāda* monk and teacher Ajahn Chah (1918–1992) observes:

That which ‘looks over’ the various factors which arise in meditation is *sati*, mindfulness. This *sati* is a condition which, through practice, can help other factors to arise. *Sati* is life. Whenever we don’t have *sati*, when we are heedless, it’s as if we are dead. If we have no *sati*, then our speech and actions have no meaning. *Sati* is simply recollection. It’s a cause for the arising of self-awareness and wisdom. Whatever virtues we have cultivated are imperfect if lacking in *sati*. *Sati* is that which watches over us while standing, walking, sitting, and lying. Even when we are no longer in *samādhi*, *sati* should be present throughout. . . .

Sati watches over and takes care of the mind. You must maintain this knowing and not be careless or wander astray, no matter what condition the mind takes on. The trick is to have *sati* taking control and supervising the mind. Once the mind is unified with *sati*, a new kind of awareness will emerge. The mind that has developed calm is held in check by that calm, just like a chicken held in a coop. . . . The chicken is unable to wander outside, but it can still move around within the coop. Its walking to and fro doesn’t get it into trouble because it is restrained by the coop. Likewise the awareness that takes place when the mind has *sati* and is calm does not cause trouble. None of the thinking or sensations that take place within the calm mind cause harm or disturbance.

Some people don’t want to experience any thoughts or feelings at all, but this is going too far. Feelings arise within the state of calm. The mind is both experiencing feelings and calm at the same time, without being disturbed. When there is calm like this there are no harmful consequences. Problems occur when the ‘chicken gets out of

the coop'. For instance, you may be watching the breath entering and leaving and then forget yourself, allowing the mind to wander away from the breath, back home, off to the shops, or to any number of different places. Maybe even half an hour may pass before you suddenly realize you're supposed to be practising meditation and reprimand yourself for your lack of *sati*. This is where you have to be really careful, because this is where the chicken gets out of the coop – the mind leaves its base of calm.

You must take care to maintain the awareness with *sati* and try to pull the mind back. Although I use the words 'pull the mind back', in fact the mind doesn't really go anywhere, only the object of awareness has changed. You must make the mind stay right here and now. As long as there is *sati* there will be presence of mind. It seems like you are pulling the mind back, but really it hasn't gone anywhere, it has simply changed a little. It seems that the mind goes here and there, but in fact the change occurs right at the one spot. When *sati* is regained, in a flash you are back with the mind without it having to be brought from anywhere.

When there is total knowing, a continuous and unbroken awareness at each and every moment, this is called presence of mind. If your attention drifts from the breath to other places, then the knowing is broken. Whenever there is awareness of the breath the mind is there. With just the breath and this even and continuous awareness, you have presence of mind. . . .

We must use *sati* to constantly cleanse the mind. Everybody has *sati*; even a cat has it when it's going to catch a mouse. A dog has it when it barks at people. This is a form of *sati*, but it's not *sati* according to the *Dhamma*. . . .

If we have *sati*, we will see the state of our own mind. Whatever we are thinking or feeling, we must know it. . . . So the straight way to practise is to have mindfulness, *sati*. If you are without *sati* for five minutes, you are crazy for five minutes, heedless for five minutes; whenever you are lacking in *sati*, you are crazy. So *sati* is essential. To have *sati* is to know yourself, to know the condition of your mind and your life.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD pp.107, 214–15, 237, 278

See also: **ānāpānasati, anussati, kāyagatāsati, maraṇasati, satipaṭṭhāna.**

satipaṭṭhāna (Pa), **dran pa nyer bzhag** (T), **niànchù** (C), **nenjo** (J) *Lit.* foundation (*paṭṭhāna, nyer bzhag, chù*) of mindfulness (*sati, dran pa, niàn*) or attendance (*upaṭṭhāna*) to mindfulness (*sati*); the four foundations, frames of reference or

‘objects’ of mindfulness described in the Buddhist Pali *suttas*, which together comprise full and constant awareness of all aspects of the mind-body complex together with the primary Buddhist teachings. Understood as *sati-upaṭṭhāna*, the term has also been translated as ‘establishment of mindfulness’, ‘arousing of mindfulness’, and ‘presence of mindfulness’. Part of the purpose of the practice of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* is that all activity of body and mind should be founded upon full awareness and comprehension.

Although, from a spiritual perspective, both ‘foundation of mindfulness’ and ‘attendance to mindfulness’ are worthy of reflection, the latter is probably the meaning originally intended. *Paṭṭhāna* does not appear as a separate term anywhere in the Pali *suttas*, while *upaṭṭhāna* is to be found throughout. Moreover, the interpretation as ‘foundation (*paṭṭhāna*)’ is first found in the Pali commentaries on the *suttas*, and it is from there that this meaning has come into vogue. Also, in the early Sanskrit texts the term is clearly *smṛityupasthāna*, in which *upasthāna* means ‘attendance to’ or ‘ministering to’ and is equivalent to *sati-upaṭṭhāna*. *Upasthāna* and *upaṭṭhāna* both emphasize the focused attention that needs to be brought to bear on the subject of awareness or mindfulness. ‘Foundation (*paṭṭhāna*)’ merely points to the subjects upon which mindfulness is to be established. Even so, although the Pali commentaries do acknowledge both meanings, they exhibit a preference for *paṭṭhāna*, which has become the commonly accepted meaning.

The four *satipaṭṭhānas* are: contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*); contemplation of sensations and sensory-mental processes (*vedānānupassanā*); contemplation of the mind or consciousness (*cittānupassanā*); and contemplation of mind-objects or mental things and processes (*dhammānupassanā*). These four contemplations encompass the four areas of human experience in which constant mindfulness should be cultivated by means of specific meditational practices. By becoming aware of what is happening within his own being, physical and mental, a meditator comes to realize that no real or permanent identity is to be found there. The intention is to lead the meditator to complete awareness of all aspects of his being, and thence to *nibbāna*, through purification of the negative and expansion of the positive. Considered in greater detail, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are:

1. *Kāyānupassanā*. Contemplation (*anupassanā*) of the body (*kāya*) and bodily processes (*kāya-sankhāra*), which is further subdivided into six practices: mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*); mindfulness of bodily posture (*iriyāpatha*, ‘ways of going’) or deportment; mindfulness and clarity of mind or consciousness (*sati-sampajañña*); meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body (*kāyagatāsati*); analysis or definition of the elements (*dhātu-vavatthāna*); and charnel-ground meditation (*sīvathikā-manasikāra*). See *kāyagatāsati*, *kāyānupassanā*.

2. *Vedanānupassanā*. Contemplation (*anupassanā*) of sensations and sensory-mental processes (*vedanā*). This includes all feelings and sensations of body and mind that originate in the senses. Though ‘sensations’ or ‘feelings’ are commonly accepted translations of *vedanā*, they do not really convey the full meaning of the term in this context. According to Buddhist (and Hindu) philosophy, each of the bodily sense organs has a subtle mental counterpart, by means of which one becomes conscious of sensory input. *Vedanā* refers to the sensations or feelings that arise when the external sense organs activate their internal mental counterparts, especially regarding the degree of pleasure or aversion that is experienced. Such feelings or sensations may be gross or subtle, physical or mental, and agreeable, disagreeable, or neutral. Being mindful of these sensations means that one observes them, but does not react to them with attraction or aversion. Heat and cold, for example, may be comfortable or uncomfortable, agreeable or disagreeable. Being mindful of these sensations or feelings means that they are observed impartially, without a deeper reaction of personal attraction or aversion. In the sense intended here, ‘feeling’ does not imply emotion.

The purpose of *vedanānupassanā* is freedom from superficial understanding, the attainment of spiritual insight (*vipassanā*), and right understanding of the true nature of sensations – their dependent origination, their rise and fall, and their essential impermanence. Mindfulness or contemplation of these sensations helps the meditator accept sensations as they arise and disappear; he comes to understand that sensations only arise for the purpose of information and remembrance. Therefore, he neither rejects, grasps, nor clings to them. In this way, he avoids uncontrolled responses to sensory experiences, thereby freeing himself from the negative feelings of pleasure and pain. According to the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha describes *vedanānupassanā*:

In experiencing sensations, the disciple is aware: “I have an agreeable sensation,” or “I have a disagreeable sensation,” or “I have a neutral sensation.” Or “I have an agreeable worldly sensation” or “I have an agreeable unworldly sensation.” Or “I have a disagreeable worldly sensation” or “I have a disagreeable unworldly sensation.” Or “I have a neutral worldly sensation” or “I have a neutral unworldly sensation.”

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.298; cf. WBOB p.64

He observes the experience, but does not react to it. Nyanaponika Thera explains:

It is the uncontrolled reaction to feelings (*vedanā*) that produces and nourishes the tendencies. According to Buddhist psychology, the

feelings one passively undergoes in sense experience are morally neutral. They are results of *kamma*, not creators of *kamma*. It is the reaction to feelings, following the passive sense encounters, that determines the wholesome or unwholesome quality of the responsive, active states of consciousness.

In the contemplation of feelings, one distinctly realizes that (for example) a pleasant feeling is not identical with lust and need not be followed by it; that an unpleasant feeling is not identical with aversion and need not be followed by it; that a neutral feeling is not identical with ignorant, deluded thoughts, and need not be followed by them.

In that practice, the meditator learns to stop at the bare experience of pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings. By doing so, he makes a definite start in cutting through the chain of dependent origination at that decisive point where feeling becomes the condition for craving. It will thus become the meditator's indubitable experience that the causal sequence of feeling and craving is not a necessary one, and that the Buddha's words of encouragement are true: "One can abandon the unwholesome! If it were not possible, I would not ask you to do so."¹

Nyanaponika Thera, Roots of Good and Evil, RGET p.62

Bhikkhu Bodhi considers the practice in greater detail. First he discusses what is meant by feelings or sensations (*vedanā*):

The next foundation of mindfulness is feeling (*vedanā*). The word 'feeling' is used here, not in the sense of emotion (a complex phenomenon best subsumed under the third and fourth foundations of mindfulness – mind and 'things' of the mind), but in the narrower sense of the affective tone or 'hedonic quality' of experience. This may be of three kinds, yielding three principal types of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neutral feeling. The Buddha teaches that feeling is an inseparable concomitant of consciousness, since every act of knowing is coloured by some affective tone. Thus feeling is present at every moment of experience; it may be strong or weak, clear or indistinct, but some feeling must accompany the cognition.

Feeling arises in dependence on a mental event called 'contact (*phassa*)'. Contact marks the 'coming together' of consciousness with the object via a sense faculty; it is the factor by virtue of which consciousness 'touches' the object presenting itself to the mind through the sense organ. Thus there are six kinds of contact distinguished by the six sense faculties – eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, and mind-contact – and six kinds of feeling distinguished by the contact from which they spring.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 pp.45–46

He then outlines how such feelings give rise to human imperfections:

Feeling acquires special importance as an object of contemplation because it is feeling that usually triggers the latent defilements into activity. The feelings may not be clearly registered, but in subtle ways they nourish and sustain the dispositions to unwholesome states. Thus when a pleasant feeling arises, we fall under the influence of the defilement greed and cling to it. When a painful feeling occurs, we respond with displeasure, hate and fear, which are aspects of aversion. And when a neutral feeling occurs, we generally do not notice it, or let it lull us into a false sense of security – states of mind governed by delusion. From this it can be seen that each of the root defilements is conditioned by a particular kind of feeling: greed by pleasant feeling, aversion by painful feeling, delusion by neutral feeling.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 p.46

Next, he discusses how objective observation of meditation on such feelings can increase awareness of the process by which the mind reacts to them, thereby reducing the mind's otherwise instant reactions:

But the link between feelings and the defilements is not a necessary one. Pleasure does not always have to lead to greed, pain to aversion, neutral feeling to delusion. The tie between them can be snapped, and one essential means for snapping it is mindfulness. Feeling will stir up a defilement only when it is not noticed, when it is indulged rather than observed. By turning it into an object of observation, mindfulness defuses the feeling so that it cannot provoke an unwholesome response. Then, instead of relating to the feeling by way of habit through attachment, repulsion or apathy, we relate by way of contemplation, using the feeling as a springboard for understanding the nature of experience.

In the early stages the contemplation of feeling involves attending to the arisen feelings, noting their distinctive qualities: pleasant, painful, neutral. The feeling is noted without identifying with it, without taking it to be 'I' or 'mine' or something happening 'to me'. Awareness is kept at the level of bare attention: one watches each feeling that arises, seeing it as merely a feeling, a bare mental event shorn of all subjective references, all pointers to an ego. The task is simply to note the feeling's quality, its tone of pleasure, pain, or neutrality.

But as practice advances, as one goes on noting each feeling, letting it go and noting the next, the focus of attention shifts from the qualities of feelings to the process of feeling itself. The process reveals a ceaseless flux of feelings arising and dissolving, succeeding one

another without a halt. Within the process there is nothing lasting. Feeling itself is only a stream of events, occasions of feeling flashing into being moment by moment, dissolving as soon as they arise. Thus begins the insight into impermanence, which, as it evolves, overturns the three unwholesome roots. There is no greed for pleasant feelings, no aversion for painful feelings, no delusion over neutral feelings. All are seen as merely fleeting and substanceless events devoid of any true enjoyment or basis for involvement.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 p.46

3. *Cittānupassanā*. Contemplation of mind or consciousness (*citta*) encompasses observation of the many thoughts, moods, passions and so on that can pass through the mind, as well as other states of mind and consciousness. These thoughts and moods may be: angry or compassionate, hateful or loving, deluded or wise, distracted or concentrated, contracted or expanded, depressed or blissful, gross or sublime, mystical or mundane, unliberated or liberated, and so on. One who is mindful is aware of all that passes in his mind and consciousness – positive or negative – but remains unattached. Buddhism uses the term *citta* for both mind and consciousness. *Citta* as ‘mind’ refers collectively to all the many moments of consciousness. *Vedanā* is just one aspect of *citta*. Bhikkhu Bodhi explains. Firstly, he describes the basic Buddhist concept of mind (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*):

With this foundation of mindfulness, we turn from a particular mental factor, feeling (*vedanā*), to the general state of mind to which that factor belongs. To understand what is entailed by this contemplation, it is helpful to look at the Buddhist conception of the mind. Usually we think of the mind as an enduring faculty remaining identical with itself through the succession of experiences. Though experience changes, the mind which undergoes the changing experience seems to remain the same, perhaps modified in certain ways but still retaining its identity. However, in the Buddha’s teaching the notion of a permanent mental organ is rejected. The mind is regarded, not as a lasting subject of thought, feeling and volition, but as a sequence of momentary mental acts, each distinct and discrete, their connections with one another causal rather than substantial.

A single act of consciousness is called a *citta*, which we shall render ‘a state of mind’. Each *citta* consists of many components, the chief of which is consciousness itself, the basic experiencing of the object; consciousness is also called *citta*, the name for the whole being given to its principal part. Along with consciousness, every *citta* contains a set of concomitants called *cetasikas*, mental factors. These

include feeling, perception, volition, the emotions, *etc.*; in short, all the mental functions except the primary knowing of the object, which is *citta* or consciousness.

Since consciousness in itself is just a bare experiencing of an object, it cannot be differentiated through its own nature but only by way of its associated factors, the *cetasikas*. The *cetasikas* colour the *citta* and give it its distinctive character; thus when we want to pinpoint the *citta* as an object of contemplation, we have to do so by using the *cetasikas* as indicators.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 pp.46–47

Secondly, he outlines the practice of contemplation on the mind and its various states:

In his exposition of the contemplation of the state of mind, the Buddha mentions,² by reference to *cetasikas*, sixteen kinds of *citta* to be noted: the mind with lust (*sarāga*); the mind without lust (*vītarāga*); the mind with aversion (*sadosa*); the mind without aversion (*vītadosa*); the mind with delusion (*samoha*); the mind without delusion (*vītamoha*); the cramped (*saṃkhitta*) mind; the scattered mind (*vikkhitta*); the developed (*mahaggata*) mind; the undeveloped (*amaggata*) mind; the surpassable (*sa-uttara*) mind; the unsurpassable (*anuttara*) mind; the concentrated (*samāhita*) mind; the unconcentrated (*asamāhita*) mind; the freed (*vimutta*) mind; the unfreed (*avimutta*) mind. For practical purposes it is sufficient at the start to focus solely on the first six states, noting whether the mind is associated with any of the unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*: delusion, lust, aversion) or free from them.

When a particular *citta* is present, it is contemplated merely as a *citta*, a state of mind. It is not identified with as ‘I’ or ‘mine’, not taken as a self or as something belonging to a self. Whether it is a pure state of mind or a defiled state, a lofty state or a low one, there should be no elation or dejection, only a clear recognition of the state. The state is simply noted, then allowed to pass without clinging to the desired ones or resenting the undesired ones.

As contemplation deepens, the contents of the mind become increasingly rarefied. Irrelevant flights of thought, imagination, and emotion subside; mindfulness becomes clearer; the mind remains intently aware, watching its own process of becoming. At times there might appear to be a persisting observer behind the process, but with continued practice even this apparent observer disappears. The mind itself – the seemingly solid, stable mind – dissolves into a stream of

cittas flashing in and out of being moment by moment, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, yet continuing in sequence without pause.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 p.47

Another contemporary Buddhist, V.F. Gunaratna, describes the practice of *cittānupassanā* in a more colloquial manner:

The third type of mindfulness is mindfulness of thoughts (*cittānupassanā*). Just as the disciple is expected to watch objectively the play of sensations in him, so he is expected to watch objectively the play of thoughts upon him. It is highly beneficial to mind the mind this way. Do we ever deal with thousands of visitors every day? Yes, we do. Every day thousands of thoughts enter our minds. We are so accustomed to this that we take these visitors for granted. Every thought we think influences us for good or bad. A subsequent thought however can modify the influence of the previous thought. A thought of anger, for example, has injurious effects on one's mind, and even on one's body; but if the immediately subsequent thought is one of an opposite nature, or one of repentance and a realization that what was done was wrong, the injurious effects of the angry thought may be modified. If we develop the habit of looking at any bad thought objectively, we can easily arrest the progress of that bad thought. Practising mindfulness of thought is the cultivation of the habit of looking objectively at a thought, and not subjectively, and of being deeply aware of its presence.

No thought should be able to enter the portals of our mind without our being fully aware of it. Then only are we free from being blindly led by the force of thoughts. When a thought of anger arises, one must be fully aware of this and tell oneself, "Now look, a thought of anger has entered my mind." By this introspection a subtle effect is produced. The angry thought loses its compelling nature. It has spent its force and cannot express itself as an angry deed. This objective way of looking at any evil thought thus protects the disciple from its pernicious influence.

Whenever any evil thought enters the mind, the watch dog of *sati* (mindfulness) barks at the unwelcome visitor and cautions the disciple, who can then induce a thought of an opposite nature to counteract the evil thought.

V.F. Gunaratna, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Its Application to Modern Life, WH60 p.9

4. *Dhammānupassanā*. Contemplation of the *dhammas* ('mind-objects', mental and emotional things and processes). In this context, *dhammas* refer

to ‘things’ or ‘objects’ and the term is generally translated as ‘mind-objects’ or sometimes as ‘phenomena’, neither of which adequately convey the breadth of meaning. The *dhammas* listed in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*³ consist of:

The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) of sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*) of any kind in the field of the five senses, ill will (*vyāpāda*) of any sort, sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and anxiety (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and wavering doubt or lack of conviction (*vicikicchā*).

The five aggregates (*khandhas*) of mind and body that comprise the individuality of a sentient being in this world.

The six external and internal sense-bases (*āyatana*) – the five external senses and the five mental counterparts (e.g. the eye and sight, ear and sound, etc., plus the mind and mental things).

The seven factors that lead to enlightenment (*bojjhanga*) – mindfulness, seeking or investigation, effort or energy, rapture, bliss or tranquillity, concentration, and serenity or equanimity.

The four noble truths (*cattāri ariya-saccāni*) – there is suffering, it has a cause, it can be ended, and there is a Path to liberation from it.

Outside of the Pali *suttas*, many other aspects of the Buddhist path have been included by writers and commentators as *dhammas*, as subjects for contemplation and mindfulness.

For each of these, one who is truly mindful fully understands their nature, observes the extent to which they are or are not prevalent in himself, and endeavours to overcome what needs to be overcome and to cultivate what needs cultivation. The standard formula in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* runs:

Here, a monk abides contemplating *dhammas* as *dhammas* in respect of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). How does he do so? Here, monks, if sensual desire (*kāma*) is present in himself, a monk knows that it is present. If sensual desire is absent in himself, a monk knows that it is absent. And he knows how unarisen sensual desire comes to arise; and he knows how the abandonment of arisen sensual desire comes about; and he knows how the non-arising of the abandoned sensual desire in the future will come about.

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.299; cf. TBLD p.341

The same formula is repeated for each of the other four hindrances. For the five *khandhas*, the *bhikkhu* thinks, for example, “Such is form (*rūpa*), such

the arising of form, such the disappearance of form,”⁴ and likewise for the other four. For the six internal and external sense objects (*āyatana*), the formula goes, for instance:

Here a monk knows the ear, knows sounds, and he knows whatever fetter (*saṃyojana*) arises dependent on the two. And he knows how an unarisen fetter comes to arise, and he knows how the abandonment of an arisen fetter comes about, and he knows how the non-arising of the abandoned fetter in the future will come about.

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTS22 p.302, TBLD p.342

The fetters (*saṃyojana*), here, are those things that bind a sentient being to *saṃsāra* (transmigration). For the enlightenment factors, the formula is similar:

Here, monks, if the enlightenment factor (*sambojjhanga*) of mindfulness (*sati*) is present in himself, a monk knows that it is present. If the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is absent in himself, he knows that it is absent. And he knows how the unarisen enlightenment factor of mindfulness comes to arise, and he knows how the complete development of the enlightenment factor of mindfulness comes about.

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTS22 p.303, TBLD p.343

Basically, the practitioner observes the presence or absence of the *dharmas*, assesses what needs to be done about it, and knows how to deal with it. Bhikkhu Bodhi summarizes. Firstly, he considers the meaning of the term *dhamma* in this context:

In the context of the fourth foundation of mindfulness, the multivalent word *dhamma* (here intended in the plural) has two interconnected meanings, as the account in the *sutta* shows. One meaning is *cetasikas*, the mental factors, which are now attended to in their own right apart from their role as colouring the state of mind, as was done in the previous contemplation. The other meaning is the elements of actuality, the ultimate constituents of experience as structured in the Buddha's teaching. To convey both senses, we render *dhamma* as 'phenomena', for lack of a better alternative. But when we do so, this should not be taken to imply the existence of some noumenon or substance behind the phenomena. . . .

The *sutta* section on the contemplation of phenomena is divided into five subsections, each devoted to a different set of phenomena: the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six inner and outer sense bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the four noble truths. Among these, the five hindrances and the seven enlightenment factors

are *dhamma* in the narrower sense of mental factors, the others are *dhamma* in the broader sense of constituents of actuality.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 pp.47–48

He then considers contemplation of the individual *dhammas*. Of the five hindrances and seven factors of enlightenment, he says:

The five hindrances and seven factors of enlightenment require special attention because they are the principal impediments and aids to liberation. The hindrances – sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and doubt – generally become manifest in an early stage of practice, soon after the initial expectations and gross disturbances subside and the subtle tendencies find the opportunity to surface. Whenever one of the hindrances crops up, its presence should be noted; then, when it fades away, a note should be made of its disappearance. To ensure that the hindrances are kept under control an element of comprehension is needed: we have to understand how the hindrances arise, how they can be removed, and how they can be prevented from arising in the future. . . .

A similar mode of contemplation is to be applied to the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. When any one of these factors arises, its presence should be noted. Then, after noting its presence, one has to investigate to discover how it arises and how it can be matured. When they first spring up, the enlightenment factors are weak, but with consistent cultivation, they accumulate strength. Mindfulness initiates the contemplative process. When it becomes well-established, it arouses investigation, the probing quality of intelligence. Investigation in turn calls forth energy, energy gives rise to rapture, rapture leads to tranquillity, tranquillity to one-pointed concentration, and concentration to equanimity. Thus the whole evolving course of practice leading to enlightenment begins with mindfulness, which remains throughout as the regulating power ensuring that the mind is clear, cognizant, and balanced.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, WH308 p.48

V.F. Gunaratna concludes his informal résumé:

These are the *dhammas* referred to in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Through the disciple's daily experiences, he must be able to observe these *dhammas* or special mental objects. He must be alive to these conditions if they arise in him, and if they have not arisen in him, he must be aware that they have not arisen in him. It is not a theoretical

knowledge of these *dhammas* that matters. One must actually experience them and know them as such when they arise. For instance, the five hindrances are not merely to be known theoretically as obstructions to spiritual progress, but one must be on the lookout to recognize them as soon as they arise. . . .

This meditation is both an antidote to evil thoughts and a preparation for the reception of the truths of the *Dhamma*. In this manner, all the daily experiences of the disciple can be brought into conformity with the contents of the *Dhamma* at some point or other. Contemplating thus the mental objects as they arise, the disciple again finds that there is no permanent principle to which it is profitable or desirable to cling. He depends on nothing. He clings to nothing. Again, he touches a higher plane, and that way lies *nibbāna*.

V.F. Gunaratna, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Its Application to Modern Life*, WH60 pp.10–11

These, then, are the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. According to a summary in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, by attentive mindfulness to them, “a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body (*kāya*) as a body, . . . sensations (*vedanā*) as sensations, . . . consciousness (*citta*) as consciousness, . . . and *dhammas* as *dhammas*, . . . ardent, fully aware (*sampajāna*) and mindful (*satimā*), having put aside hankering (*abhijjhā*) and unhappiness (*domanassa*) regarding the world.”⁵ “Contemplating the body as a body” and so on implies being constantly and fully mindful, present or aware of the body, of sensations and mental processes, of consciousness, and of the thoughts that pass through the mind. The four *satipaṭṭhānas* are not to be understood as separate exercises, but as integrally bound, the one with the others, meditative exercises practised on the path to *nibbāna*.

Identical and detailed expositions of the subject are found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*, both of which end with the unequivocal claim:

Whoever, monks, should practise these four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) for just seven years may expect one of two results: either arahantship (*i.e.* enlightenment) in this life or, should some trace of clinging remain, the state of a non-returner (*anāgāmī*). . . .

The only way (*magga*) that leads to the attainment of purity (*visuddhi*), to the overcoming of sorrow and distress, to the end of suffering (*dukkha*) and unhappiness (*domanassa*), to the entering the right path, and to the realization of *nibbāna* is the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

Dīgha Nikāya 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTS2 pp.314–15; cf. PBD pp.307–8,

TBLD p.350

The formula asserting a period of seven years is then repeated in ever-diminishing time frames down to just one week. A “non-returner” is one who, after death, completes his journey to enlightenment from one of the higher heavens.

The Buddha recommends practice of the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas* to all his disciples, whatever their level of spiritual advancement – novices, monks who are following the *Dhamma*, or *arahantas*.⁶ In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, at a time when the Buddha was eighty and had been through a recent bout of illness, causing severe distress among his disciples, he advises them to dwell within themselves and to find solace there. And the method he advocates for accomplishing this is again the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas*:

Dwell with yourself as your own island, with yourself as your own refuge, with no other refuge; dwell with the *Dhamma* as your island, with the *Dhamma* as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a *bhikkhu* dwell with himself as his own island, . . . *etc.* A *bhikkhu* dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, fully aware (*sampajāna*) and mindful (*satimā*), having put aside hankering and unhappiness regarding the world. . . . *etc.* He dwells contemplating sensations (*vedanā*) in sensations, . . . consciousness (*citta*) in consciousness, . . . *dhammas* in *dhammas*.

Samyutta Nikāya 47:9, Gilāna Sutta, PTSS5 p.154; cf. CDBB p.1637

See also: **kāyānupassanā**.

1. *Anguttara Nikāya* 2:19, *Kusala Sutta*, PTSA1 p.58.
2. *E.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 3:101, PTSA1 p.255.
3. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.300–5.
4. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSD2 p.302; *cf. TBLD* p.342.
5. *Majjhima Nikāya* 118, *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, PTSM3 pp.83–85; *cf. MDBB* pp.945–46.
6. *Samyutta Nikāya* 47:4, *Sālā Sutta*, PTSS5 pp.144–45.

sati-sampajañña (Pa) *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati*) with full awareness (*sampajañña*); specifically, the second of the six Buddhist practices included in *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body), as described in the *Kāyagatāsati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*.¹ See **sampajañña**.

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), PTSD2 p.292; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), PTSM1 p.57, PTSM3 p.90.

seclusion See **solitary life**.

senāsana (Pa) *Lit.* bed (*sayana*) seat (*āsana*); bed and chair; lodging, dwelling, dwelling place, resting place; one of the four necessities in the life of a Buddhist monk (*bhikkhu*).

According to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, a monk's dwelling (*senāsana*) should possess five characteristics:

How, O *bhikkhus*, does a dwelling (*senāsana*) possess five characteristics? Such a dwelling is not too far, nor too near (to a village), is suitable for going (on an alms round) and returning. During the day, it is not disturbed by people, and at night it is quiet and still. One is not much disturbed there by flies, mosquitoes, wind, the burning sun, and creeping things. While living in that dwelling, a monk obtains robes, alms food, dwelling, and the necessary medicines without difficulty.

In that dwelling, elder monks are living, of great learning, heirs to the heritage, masters of the *Dhamma* and of the *vinaya* (monastic code). . . . And he approaches them from time to time, and enquires: "How is this, *Bhante*? What is the meaning of this?" Those venerable ones then disclose to him what has not been disclosed, clear up what is obscure, and dispel his perplexity concerning numerous perplexing points.

Anguttara Nikāya 10:11, *Senāsana Sutta*, PTSA5 pp.15–16; cf. ANTB, NDBB p.1349

Nonetheless, a monk should be content with whatever falls to his lot:

A *bhikkhu* is content with any kind of dwelling (*senāsana*), and he speaks in praise of contentment with any kind of dwelling, and he does not engage in a wrong search, in what is improper, for the sake of dwelling. If he does not get a dwelling, he is not agitated; and if he gets it he uses it without being tied to it, infatuated with it, and blindly absorbed in it, seeing the danger in it and understanding the escape from it. Yet he does not extol himself or disparage others because of this.

Anguttara Nikāya 4:28, *Ariyavaṃsa Sutta*, PTSA2 p.28; cf. NDBB p.415

Various simple dwellings are regarded as suitable for the practice of meditation. Some of these are listed among the optional ascetic practices (*dhutangas*):

He resorts to a secluded dwelling (*senāsana*): the forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle highland, the open air, a heap of straw. Gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down, folding his legs crosswise,

straightening his body, and establishing mindfulness (*sati*) in front of him.

Anguttara Nikāya 5:75, *Paṭhamayodhājīvūpama Sutta*, *PTSA3* p.92; cf. *NDBB* p.703

Buddhaghosa observes in his *Visuddhimagga* that a monk “should avoid a monastery (*vihāra*) unfavourable to the development of concentration and go to live in one that is favourable”.¹

See also: **dhutanga**.

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 4:19, *PTSV* p.122, *PPVM* p.116.

sesshin (J) *Lit.* focusing (*seisu*) the heart-mind (*shin*) or touching (*setsu*) the heart-mind (*shin*); gathering or collecting the mind; encountering the mind; concentrating and unifying the mind; a period of intensive meditation, traditionally lasting seven days and seven nights, which takes place in the meditation hall (*zendō*) of a *Rinzai* or *Sōtō* monastery or in a more eclectic *Zen* centre; a *Zen* retreat.

In modern times, in both Japan and the West, *sesshins* generally last for between one and seven days, with lay Buddhists also permitted to take part. Some *sesshins*, however, may sometimes last several weeks. Normal monastic life includes several hours a day of meditation. During a *sesshin*, the amount of time devoted to meditation is significantly extended. Some Buddhist festivals are celebrated in monasteries with a seven-day *sesshin*. *Rōhatsu sesshin*, for instance, culminates on *Bodhi* Day, which commemorates the Buddha’s enlightenment. The day is preceded by a week-long *sesshin* in which the monks and nuns try to emulate the resolution of the Buddha when he vowed to sit in ceaseless meditation under the *bodhi* tree until he attained enlightenment. An all-night vigil is often kept on the first and last nights of the *sesshin*, when the monks remain in meditation for the whole night and do not lie down. In some monasteries, monks do not lie down for the entire week. The *Rōhatsu sesshin* takes place in December, and many monasteries hold a second seven-day *sesshin* during the summer.

A *sesshin* is regarded as the high point of *Zen* training in which the monks remain in the monastery, devoting themselves almost exclusively to meditation. Various timings are utilized, the traditional regimes being more intensive than their modern equivalents. Thirty-to-sixty-minute periods of practice, starting at 3 a.m. in summer and 4 a.m. in winter, continuing late into the evening, are interrupted only by four to six hours for sleep, by recitations of *sūtras*, by short periods of chores such as cleaning or cooking or gardening, by ten-minute intervals of walking meditation (*kinhin*) to refresh mind and body, by longer rest breaks after the midday and evening meals, and by tea

ceremonies. Even during these breaks, the monks continue, as far as possible, with their internal practice and mental focus. Changes from one activity to the next are regulated by the sound of a bell or gong.

During this time, a monk receives instructions from his *rōshi* (beloved or venerable teacher) in private interviews (*dokusan*), at which students can ask questions related to difficulties in meditation as well as discuss the answers to a *kōan* that may have been assigned to them. The *rōshi* also delivers a discourse (*teishō*) once or twice a day. Before these discourses, lights and flowers are arrayed in front of a statue of the Buddha. The *rōshi* bows three times to the statue before starting his discourse. The students reverentially fold their books in cloths before placing them on the floor. The fourfold vow is then recited three times: to save all living beings from transmigration, to eliminate all worldly desires, to enter the gates of *Dharma*, and to fulfil the path to buddhahood.

As part of the *sesshin* tradition, the head monk (J. *jikijitsu* in *Rinzai*; *godō* in *Sōtō*), who is next to the *rōshi* in rank and is responsible for the smooth running of the monastery, walks around the *zendō* holding a wooden stick (J. *keisaku* or *kyōsaku*) referred to as a ‘blow of compassion stick’ or ‘encouragement stick’, which he uses to strike the shoulders of student meditators to wake them up when they doze off, or lose their focus or alertness during long periods of *zazen* meditation. These strikes are more like taps that are generally not violent, and will often relieve muscle cramps for the student receiving them. In the *Rinzai* school, the student may receive a blow if the *jikijitsu* feels the student has lost his focus; this is done without the student’s request or consent. In the *Sōtō* school, a student will ask for a blow by placing both palms together (*gasshō*) as the *godō* walks in front of him.

The effect of *sesshin* varies from person to person, and will also depend upon individual moods and circumstances. Many challenges are to be met and overcome. Some will experience great peace and inspiration; others will struggle continuously with their thoughts. Experienced meditators will normally fare better than newcomers, but that is not always so. The neuroscientist and *Zen* practitioner James Austin (b.1925) describes *sesshin* from his own personal understanding and experience in a *Rinzai* monastery:

Days start at 4 to 5 a.m. and end at 9 or 10 p.m. or later if the meditator so chooses. Common-sense rules are in force. Discipline is strict during the formal *zazen* periods, which may total some six hours or so each day. Soon, leg, shoulder and back complaints become a major problem, and mental side effects, *makyō*, may become prominent. A *sesshin*, then, meshes some of the physical hurdles of an outward-bound experience with rigorous inward-bound challenges. *Zazen* provides ample opportunities to encounter both kinds. One must endure, and learns to do so.

Zazen periods of twenty-five to forty minutes are interspersed with periods of walking meditation, chanting, work, exercise, rest, and light meals. During all of these, the aspirant minds his or her own 'business'. This means not talking, reading, or telephoning. Most lay students need at least the first half of the *sesshin* merely to settle down, and to become free from distractions. Gradually, one becomes steady, utterly single-minded, and concentrated in the meditative mode.

Zazen periods are not uniform in texture. They vary substantially within, and among themselves. The beginner tends to subject them to 'good' or 'bad' value judgments. The variability reflects more than the meditator's fluctuating ability to relax and to concentrate, because unpredictable physiological currents also swirl in to shift one's inner weather. Changes blow hot or cold quickly, sometimes ranging from elation to despair over five to ten minutes. Periods of arousal can be permeated with energy and a positive affective tone, or with feelings of tension and pessimism. Brisk walks during *kinhin* for only five to ten minutes can lift mood for an hour or so. After several *sesshin*, one becomes less judgmental, learns to take what comes.

Communications with others take place mostly through gestures, in writing, or in brief whispers. Seeing oneself in a mirror is avoided. The trainee talks only with the *rōshi*. The *rōshi* is increasingly supportive during his personal interviews once or twice a day. He blends a mixture of advice, encouragement, expectation and demand, keeping the student pointed in the direction of the *kōan*. The *rōshi* exhorts the student to take the *kōan* deeper into the lower abdomen, the *hara* (centre of balance), to incorporate it and sometimes to roar it out. . . .

Increasingly, insights of various sizes flash in during the simplified routine and clarity of a *sesshin*. They are empowered by a reflective mode which seems to scan the whole range of the meditator's personal life history. One's foibles rise up for especially close inspection. Observed in the power of silence, recurring behaviour patterns stick out like a sore thumb. But now they are examined at a distance, more objectively, and are less threatening to self-esteem. Decisions then flow spontaneously about how to improve oneself. Smaller-sized, more ordinary intuitions, which resolve life's lesser problems, seem to be followed by better sitting posture, fewer muscle aches, and better concentration. At night, dream scenarios become clear and more inventive than usual. Personal growth during a *sesshin* is incremental, as the *Sōtō* tradition has long emphasized.

James Austin, Zen and the Brain, ZBMC pp.139–40

Austin continues with a general appraisal of the effects of *sesshin*:

Most *sesshin* end on an upbeat note. Is this more than simple relief from suffering? Yes. The aspirant who before had been plugging along in life now has a palpable sense of being revitalized and rehumanized for a few days after it ends. The effect surpasses the way one is refreshed by a two-weeks' vacation. Such positive experiences are not unique to the Buddhist tradition, for they occur commonly in other forms of religious retreat.

The term 'deepening' conveys some of these more profoundly resonating affective levels. Deepening is coming back into close, steady, compassionate touch with a world that has taken on a freshened, sacramental quality. . . . Rinsed free of the attachments of self, the meditator now feels more intimately and empathetically aware within this larger world. Before the retreat, a blur of perceptions had taken in an ordinary world, as though it had been seen with but one eye and listened to with only one ear. Now, perception is both sensitized and subtly transformed: two eyes and both ears are wide open. A very wide-awake brain is taking in the world afresh. Deepening goes beyond this. The person not only sees and hears more but seems to see stereoscopically into novel phases of life, and to comprehend more in every new dimension disclosed. With one's perceptions open and expanded, thoughts and actions also take on a lively, efficient quality. When problems enter from the inside or outside they now meet composed responses, and simpler solutions suggest themselves.

Unfortunately, for most part-time lay students, such changes fade after several days. Still, some residues persist. So, too, do the memories of 'what it felt like to be *really* living'. More fortunate are those serious students and monks who practise for months and years in a full-time monastic setting. They enter each *sesshin* having had a solid backlog of their intensified practice in daily living. They also attend more than one or two *sesshin* a year. Even then, it will take them years of steady practice, relatively sheltered from the blizzard of worldly distractions, before each *sesshin* can exert its major cumulative effects.

James Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, ZBMC p.140

See also: **Buddhist festivals** (8.4), **jikijitsu** (7.1), **keisaku, rōshi** (7.1).

sgyu lus (T), **māyādeha**, **māyākāya** (S), **huàn shēn** (C), **genshin** (J) *Lit.* illusory (*sgyu*) body (*lus*, *deha*, *kāya*, *shēn*); illusion (*māyā*, *huàn*) body; one of the six *dharma*s of Nāropa; a name given to a range of practices that result in: the realization that one's own body and all phenomena are an illusion created by one's own mind; awareness of one's own subtle body; and the creation of a subtle emanated body that serves as a channel for the primordial, pristine

mind or awareness (*rig pa*) that is regarded as the foundation of all mind, all consciousness, and all phenomena. The Tibetan is phonetically rendered as *gyulii*.

According to the traditional story, a year after Nāropa had been taught the practice of *gtum mo*, he went to his master and, offering him a *maṇḍala*, asked for further instruction. Tilopa asked Nāropa to harden ten pieces of bamboo by covering them in molten butter and heating them over a fire, and then to sharpen their tips. Having done so, Tilopa then inserted the bamboo sticks into Nāropa's body and went away. On his return, Nāropa said that he was in great pain and felt that he was going to die. At this, Tilopa touched Nāropa with his hand, and the pain and all the wounds disappeared. Tilopa then gave Nāropa instructions concerning the illusory body.¹ By realizing the body to be an illusion, pain is understood as unreal, and with an elevated consciousness can be eliminated or at least ignored.

The practice of *sgyu lus* covers a range of meditation techniques, and there are variations in the descriptions and classifications given by different texts, schools, and lineages. Generally speaking, they fall into four categories:

1. Praising and criticizing one's reflection in a mirror, the intention being to create detachment from the body and eliminate egotism concerning it. A similar practice is to ask another person to proffer praise and insult and, by observing one's reactions, come to the realization that both praise, censure and the one at whom it is directed are all illusory.
2. Practices, such as 'dark retreat', which include reflection on the illusory and dream-like nature of the body and all phenomena, practised in a sequence of increasingly dark rooms. Dark retreat is helpful for this purpose because the visions experienced in complete darkness are more readily understood as illusory projections of one's own mind.
3. Tantric practices involving control of the bodily *prāṇa* (subtle life energy that flows through the *chakras* and *nāḍīs*) by means of visualization and seed *mantras*. In this way, a practitioner becomes aware of his own subtle physical body consisting of *prāṇa* and mind energies. This is to be distinguished from the subtler bodies that are known in Western terminology as the astral and causal bodies. Depending on the context, *sgyu lus* can refer either to the pranic body or to a more subtle body, often described in Tibetan texts as an 'emanation' body.
4. A completion-stage (T. *rdzogs rim*, S. *nishpanna-krama*) practice of *anuttara-yoga tantra* involving visualization and manipulation of the *prāṇas*, by means of which the practitioner creates or manifests a subtle

body, *sgyu lus* or *sambhoga-kāya* (enjoyment body, body of bliss) that appears in the form of his *yi dam*. A *yi dam* is a meditation deity, generally one of the celestial *buddhas* or *bodhisattvas*, with whom a practitioner identifies and through whom he is connected to the primordial, pristine or clear-light mind, thereby receiving enlightenment. Hence, a commonly encountered saying in Tibetan texts that is translated as, “I arise as (*e.g.*) Vajrasattva,” or as any of the other *yi dams*. By ‘arising’ in this illusory body or *sgyu lus* at the time of death, the practitioner is believed to avoid the *bardo* (intermediate) states that lead to rebirth. Remaining in full consciousness, enlightenment is subsequently attained.

These various stages of the illusory body are classified according to their degree of purity. Ringu Tulku Rinpoche of the *Kagyü* order speaks of the “mundane illusory body”, the “immaculate illusory body”, and the “most immaculate illusory body”. He is referring to the illusory bodies that manifest during the practice of deity *yoga* (T. *lha'i rnal 'byor*, S. *devatā yoga*), by which the entire universe, including all that is mundane, is perceived as a *maṇḍala*, infused in the mind of the practitioner with the omnipresence of his *yi dam*:

The universe and its contents are nothing but illusions as they have no substance in their nature. They just appear like illusory bodies, like dreams, like mirror reflections, and the like. To understand this and to meditate upon this helps one to cut off the mundane attachments and to realize the ultimate Truth. This practice is known as mundane illusory body. Higher tantrism makes one realize that the five aggregates (*skandhas*), the twelve *dhātus* and the six sense organs are divine by nature. This practice transforms all the mundane thoughts into divine thoughts. The universe becomes a *maṇḍala* of divine deities where the forms are gods and goddesses, sounds are *mantras*, and thoughts are transcendental wisdom. Even this immaculate appearance has no substance and hence is illusory. This practice is, therefore, known as the immaculate illusory body.

The immaculate illusory body still has a tinge of artificiality. The most immaculate illusory body, however, is a spontaneous, natural experience, born out of completely pure *prāṇa* and non-dualistic thought to achieve the last illusory body.

Ringu Tulku, *Six Yogas of Naropa*, SYNR pp.41–42

See also: **ishṭa-deva**, **Nā ro chos drug**, **nishpanna-krama**.

1. Cf. Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche, *Lifestory of Nāropa*, LSN2.

Shabd abhyās, Shabd mārg, Shabd yoga (H/Pu) *Lit.* practice (*abhyās*), path (*mārg*), or *yoga* of the Sound (*Shabd*); the practice of listening to the *Shabd*, the creative power or Sound Current. See **surat Shabd**.

shaḍāṅga yoga (S) *Lit.* *yoga* of six (*ṣaṭ*) parts (*āṅga*); sixfold *yoga*; a term for *aṣṭāṅga* (eightfold) *yoga*, first mentioned in the *Maitrī Upanishad*¹ and found in some other yogic texts, in which the first two – the *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (observances) – of the eight essential aspects of *yoga* mentioned by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras* are distinguished as external and moral virtues to be followed, necessary for successful meditation, but not in themselves forms of actual yogic or meditational practice.

The six aspects of *shaḍāṅga yoga* are generally the last six mentioned by Patañjali: *āsana* (posture), breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), mental withdrawal from the senses (*pratyāhāra*), contemplation (*dhyāna*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), and absorption (*samādhi*), but there are several variations.² The *Maitrī Upanishad* omits *āsana* and includes *tarka* (contemplative enquiry), and the order of listing is not always the same. *Tarka*, in this context, may refer either to an initial level of *samādhi* (*savikalpa samādhi*, in which some self-consciousness remains) or to introspection as to whether the mind has been fully absorbed into the focus of meditation, or to investigation into the obstacles that still remain in the way. The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* includes *japa* (repetition, recitation) as the second aspect, following *prāṇāyāma*,³ and omits *āsana*.

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**.

1. *Maitrī Upanishad* 6:18.
2. See e.g. *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* 5–6; *Ātmā Upanishad* 1:4; *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 41, 93; *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:35–40, *HSYB* pp.20–23.
3. *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 227:18.

shaghl az khvud raftan (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of going away (*raftan*) from oneself (*khvud*); the practice of leaving oneself, in which the soul of the practitioner vacates the body (*rūḥ-i khvud az-jasd-i khākī bar āvurdan*). This is described as the most special of special practices (*shughl khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*). It involves taking the soul out of the body and bringing it back. A nineteenth-century *Chishtīyah* Sufi, Mawlā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, says in his *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf* that the method is indescribable and that he himself exercises great care and caution when giving instructions to others.¹ One of his disciples Nūr al-Dīn Dehlī attained union through this very practice.

While he was singing in the presence of Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Nūr al-Dīn Dehlvī’s soul vacated his body when he came to the lines:

O bird of the sky (soul), leave this earthly body
go to the door of the Beloved and share His secrets.

Unattributed, in Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf, MTAR p.263

This *shaghl* is performed through *naḥī aṣbāt* (negation-affirmation), which involves repetition of the Muslim refrain, “*Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but God).” On uttering “*Lā ilāha*”, the soul vacates the body, journeys in the higher spiritual regions, and returns to the body when “*illā Allāh*” is repeated. In this way, according to the saying of the Prophet Muḥammad, the practitioner enjoys the experience of “dying before one’s death”.² When he has perfected this *shaghl*, he controls his life and death, and is often to be found in the state.³

See also: **shughl**.

1. Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.263.
2. *Hadīth*, AMBF 352.
3. Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.263.

shaghl-i āftābī (P) *Lit.* solar (*āftābī*) practice (*shaghl*), in which the attention is fixed upon the rising sun and is gradually trained to gaze on it continuously for long periods of time, while repeating, “*Yā Ḥayy! Yā Qayyūm!* (O Living One! O Everlasting)”.¹ It is said that the practice is best performed during the winter months, presumably to avoid damaging the eyes. This discipline leads to concentration of the attention in the eyes and helps to awaken the power of inner spiritual vision. A practitioner also takes only light food, such as rice and milk. When performed correctly and for long periods of time, the concentration of mind so developed can give the practitioner miraculous powers, but cannot take him beyond the eye centre.

This *shaghl* is mentioned briefly by a nineteenth-century *Chishtīyah* Sufi, Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, as a variation of *shaghl-i taṣavvur-i shaykh* (contemplation on the form of the master).²

According to the teachings of Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy (C19th–20th), a Sufi associated with the *Chishtīyah* and *Qādirīyah* orders, the practitioner attains the state of *fanā fī al-shams* (extinction in the sun). But the practice is regarded as inferior, resorted to only by he who regards his master’s face as inferior to that of the sun. At best, it is an auxiliary practice, designed to

help develop the power of contemplation, but it cannot take the practitioner to the divine Source or Essence.³

Trāṭak dhyān, a similar practice, mentioned in connection with *haṭha yoga*, is not concerned with the sun alone, but with any point (often the flame of a candle) on which the attention can be focused for a prolonged period.

See also: **shughl**.

1. Shāh Gul Ḥasan, *Ta'lim-i Ghawṣīah*, TGAS p.303.
2. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.259.
3. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy, in *SFAH* p.163.

shaghl-i āyīnah (P) *Lit.* mirror (*āyīnah*) practice (*shaghl*), in which the practitioner places a mirror in front of himself and fixes his attention on his reflection, especially on the pupils of the reflected image. This is accompanied by the mental repetition of “*Yā Ḥayy! Yā Qayyūm!* (O Living One! O Everlasting!).” By gazing steadily, the attention begins to turn inwards and the practitioner gains access to the eye centre, the centre of mind and soul in a human being, which lies behind the eyes.¹

This *shaghl* is mentioned briefly by a nineteenth-century *Chishtīyah* Sufi, Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, as a variation of *shaghl-i taṣavvur-i shaykh* (contemplation on the form of the master).²

See also: **shughl**.

1. Shāh Gul Ḥasan, *Ta'lim-i Ghawṣīah*, TGAS p.305.
2. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR pp.259, 267–68.

shaghl-i Ism-i Żāt (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of the Name (*Ism*) of the Essence (*Żāt*); practice of the Essential Name; said to be an exercise in which the practitioner mentally imagines that the Essential Name, understood in this context to be *Allāh Hū*, is engraved in golden or silver letters on his subtle heart centre,¹ and he focuses on this until he can see nothing else. This contemplation and practice becomes so deep-rooted that wherever the practitioner looks he sees only this Name.²

Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān describes three variant practices called by this name. In one, which is associated with breath control (*pās-i anfās*), the practitioner closes his mouth, inverts the tongue to touch the palate and, breathing in, repeats “*Allāh*.” In his imagination, he pictures the name *Allāh* to be filling and encircling his entire inner being. Then, breathing out, he says “*Hū*.”³ The practice is also called *żikr-i qalb* (remembrance of the heart).

See also: **al-Dhāt** (2.2), **dhātī Kalimah** (3.1), **dhikr**, **shughl**.

1. See also Shāh Gul Ḥasan, *Ta'lim-i Ghawṣīah*, TGAS p.304.
2. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy, in *SFAH* p.163.
3. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR pp.247–48, 253, 255.

shaghl-i maqāman maḥmūdān va sulṭānan naṣīran (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of the laudable (*maḥmūdān*) level (*maqāman*) and (*va*) the royal (*sulṭānan*) helper (*naṣīran*), in which the practitioner kneels on the floor and fixes his gaze on the tip of his nose. The attention is then gradually taken to the root of the nose, a sacred name being repeated in order to hold the mind in concentration. Ultimately, with perseverance, the attention goes within, entering the subtle centre of consciousness behind the eyes.¹

This *shaghl* has also been described as *shaghl-i Muḥammadī* (practice of Muḥammad), being comprised of two parts. The practitioner pictures his own outer self as that of the Prophet and his inner self as the glory of *Allāh*. At the outset, he fixes his gaze on the tip of his nose. This is called the station (*maqām*) of *sulṭānan naṣīran* (royal helper). He then takes his gaze upwards and focuses at the point between the eyebrows, which is called the “praiseworthy station (*maqāman maḥmūdān*)”.²

The practice has also been described as two distinct *ashghāl* – *shughl naṣīrah* and *shughl maḥmūdāh*. Facing the *Qiblah*, the practitioner adopts the kneeling position. In *shughl naṣīrah*, the attention is then focused unwaveringly on the bridge of the nose, while in *shughl maḥmūdāh* the focus is on the subtle centre just above the root of the nose, between the two eyebrows.³

See also: **shughl**.

1. Lekh Raj Puri, *Mysticism*, MSPP p.244.
2. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy, in *SFAH* p.155.
3. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.257.

shaghl-i mayyit (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of death (*mayyit*), in which the devotee lies down with his back flat on the ground and his face upwards, without any pillows or cushions under him. Practising breath control (*ḥabs-i dam*) and concentrating the mind, he breathes in from below the navel, repeating the word *Allāh*. When the breath reaches the head, he holds it there meditating on the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī* (eternal Sound). Then he exhales slowly, while repeating *Hū*, releasing the breath from the level of the navel.¹ The same practice, with slight variations, is also mentioned in *Ta'lim-i Ghawṣīah*.²

See also: **shavāsana**, **shughl**.

1. Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.264.
2. Shāh Gul Ḥasan, *Ta’līm-i Ghawṣīah*, TGAS p.306.

shaghl-i nīm-khwābī (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of semi-sleep (*nīm-khwāb*), in which, when going to sleep, the individual resolves not to sink into torpor, but to remain conscious and mentally alert. When sleep threatens to overwhelm him, the practitioner keeps reciting one of the names of *Allāh* – “*Yā Ḥayy! Yā Qayyūm!* (O Living One! O Everlasting!),” and tries to keep his eyes open by a great effort of will. Gradually, through practice, semi-consciousness is retained behind the eyes, to some extent, even though he is otherwise asleep.

Like other similar practices, the practitioner learns to hold his concentration in the eye centre, which can lead to consciousness of the subtle realm that is accessed through the eye centre.¹

See also: **shughl**.

1. Shāh Gul Ḥasan, *Ta’līm-i Ghawṣīah*, TGAS pp.305–6; Lekh Raj Puri, *Mysticism*, MSPP p.242.

shaghl-i Ṣawt-i sarmadī (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of the eternal (*sarmadī*) Sound (*Ṣawt*); the practice of the Sound Current, the divine creative power, also known as the divine Name or Word.

See also: **Ṣawt** (3.1), **shaghl-i mayyit**, **shughl sulṭān al-adhkār**.

shaghl-i sukūt (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of silence (*sukūt*), in which the practitioner rids himself of the dirt of all thoughts and practises meditation (*murāqabat*) in complete silence. He is to think, “I am not, He is.” This short exercise, it is said, can take a person to the stage of unity (*aḥadīyat*).¹

See also: **murāqabah**, **shughl**.

1. Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR p.267.

shaghl-i taṣavvur-i shaykh (P) *Lit.* practice (*shaghl*) of contemplation (*taṣavvur*) on (the form of) the master (*shaykh*), in which the practitioner closes his eyes and focuses on the form of the master so that gradually nothing is visible

except that form. He converses with the master within and a stage comes when the seeker himself becomes the form of the master, so much so that all notion of duality disappears, and he is so immersed in the master that he becomes one with him (*fanā fī al-shaykh*), then with the Prophet (*fanā fī al-Rasūl*), and finally with God (*fanā fī Allāh*).¹

See also: **fanā'** (8.1), **shughl**.

1. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Rahmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣawwuf*, MTAR pp.259–60; also, Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī, *al-Takkashuf al-Taṣawwuf*, TTAA p.447.

shavāsana (S/H) *Lit.* corpse (*shava*) posture (*āsana*) or the posture of the *siddhas* (spiritual adepts); one of the postures of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

Shem, Shem Kodsho (He) *Lit.* Name (*Shem*); His Holy (*Kodsho*) Name; a common biblical term, generally referring to the power of the Name (*Shem*) of God, trusting in the Name and so on, such passages attributing God's power and presence to His Name.¹

Post-biblical Jewish texts refer specifically to spiritual experience of the divine Name, which scholars have generally taken to imply the manipulation and permutation of particular names of God or angels. This meditation technique entailed taking the four-letter name of God (*YHWH*, *Yahweh*) or the names of some of the angels, and transposing and recombining the letters in a variety of combinations. It was believed that by focusing on these combinations, repeating them in various sequences, deep understanding could be attained concerning the nature of the divine Essence. This practice served “as the principal means for the heavenly ascent to the throne (of God), as well as being an essential part of the hymns uttered by the angels and the mystic before the glory (*kavod*) of God”.² According to a well-known adage from the *Merkavah* (chariot mysticism) period, “He is His Name and His Name is He” – a saying interpreted by the *Merkavah* mystics to mean that their goal of “seeing the King in His beauty” meant that they would have a mystical vision of the actual letters of the divine Names.

There is, however, another meaning. Meditation on the Name also refers to contemplation of the ineffable divine Essence, which is called the ‘Name’, but which is not made up of letters or of anything else associated with human speech or writing. A number of Jewish mystics have understood the Name in this way:

In the poetry of Solomon ibn Gabirol, the Name is identified as the power of the creator manifest in being through the divine will. In

pseudo-Baḥya's *Kitāb Ma'ānī al-Nafs*, it is stated that the first of the entities that emanates from the One is called by the Greeks 'Active Intellect (or Mind, Gk. *Nous*, L. *Intellectus Agens*)', and by the *Torah* 'Glory (*Kavod*)', *Shekhinah*, and 'the Name'.

According to Abraham bar Ḥiyya, the highest grade of prophecy, transcending the hearing of a voice and the vision of a form, is the explication of the divine Name (*perush ha-Shem*). Thus, reflecting on the verses: "God spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as *El Shaddai*, but I did not make myself known to them by the name *Yahweh*,'"³ bar Ḥiyya writes, "This attests that the Holy One, blessed be He, informed Moses, our master, about the secret of the explicit Name (*sod ha-Shem ha-meḥforash*), which He did not disclose to the patriarchs."⁴ ... From these examples and others that could have been cited, it is evident that Halevi's utilization of the ancient speculation concerning the Name within a Neoplatonic context is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather represents a discernible pattern in medieval Jewish Neoplatonism.

Elliot Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW pp.182–83

One of the goals of the Jewish mystics was attainment of the state of prophecy, understood as a state of spiritually elevated consciousness.⁵ Thus, in his *Kitāb al-Kūzārī*, the Jewish poet and mystic Judah Halevi writes that

in the moment of prophecy, when the prophet achieves a state of being separated from his bodily existence by "cleaving to the angelic species", he is cloaked in the holy spirit (*ruaḥ ha-kodesh*) and by means of a prophetic vision apprehends the tetragrammaton (the four-letter name of God *YHWH*).

Elliot Wolfson, on Judah Halevi, Kūzārī 4:15, SKJH, TSSW p.183

The way to attain this state was by means of the Name. Through the Name, the prophet could gain all knowledge and could understand the relationship between God and the prophets. Elliot Wolfson quotes Halevi, who says that prophecy can only be experienced through the inner vision that arises from contact with the "divine Name". The prophets, says Halevi, are perfected beings

"... whose souls are pure, and they receive the light that penetrates them like the light of sun in a crystal."⁶ ... The prophet, cloaked in the light of the *ruaḥ ha-kodesh*, apprehends the divine Name, which is a light that cleaves to the soul.

Elliot Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW p.183

It is evident that Halevi's experience of the Name was mystical. In fact, his poetry reveals the intensity of that experience. In this extract, when he refers to his 'kidneys', he means the seat of emotion, understood in medieval times to be housed in the heart in conjunction with the kidneys:

His Name (*Shem*) is in me
like fire in my kidneys,
bound to my heart,⁷
shut up in my bones.

Judah Halevi, Dīwān 3:89.47, DHJL, in TSSW p.184

Halevi is referring to a passage from Jeremiah where the prophet describes God's Word as "like a raging fire in my heart, shut up in my bones".⁸ He is saying that the source of the fire that rages in the prophet is the Name of God, the essence of God Himself.

For Halevi, the Name of God is also the inner light. It has been said that Halevi creates "the notion of the Name being inscribed on his heart and inner parts like flames of fire. The Name of God is itself the luminous substance that is within the poet."⁹ Thus, in another poem that echoes the twenty-third psalm, Halevi writes:

Your Name (*Shem*) is before me – how can I walk alone?
It is my beloved – how can I sit lonely?
It is my lamp – how can my light go dim?
How can I wander adrift, with it as a staff in my hand?

Judah Halevi, Dīwān 2:331.10, DHJL; cf. in TSSW p.185

It can be assumed, therefore, that when Halevi read the line from the *Psalms*, "I have set the Lord before me always"¹⁰ – a significant passage for Jewish mystics – he understood it to mean that the Name of God was set before him – that he enjoyed a mystical, inner experience of the Name:

This Name is a constant companion of the poet; indeed, it is his beloved, . . . as well as his lamp – the ontic source of the poet's soul, characterized as a light – and finally, the staff that supports the poet in his earthly peregrinations. In a recent discussion of this poem Raymond Scheindlin astutely observed, "This Name of God represents not merely the thought of God, but rather something divine that the poet feels to be an integral part of himself."¹¹

Elliot Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW p.185

For Halevi, the Name, the inner light, and the *Shekhinah* are part of the divine Essence:

The object of his vision ... is here characterized as the “mystical apprehension of the Name”. In the final analysis, for Halevi, the visible glory, the aspect of the *Shekhinah* ‘revealed to the eye’, is identical with the divine Name, which is the light that emanates from the holy spirit, the ‘spiritual, hidden *Shekhinah*’.¹²

Elliot Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW pp.185–86

Although for some the ‘Name’ might have been understood as a series of letters or words, it is clear that for Halevi it was something ineffable and formless – the very essence of God and the source of deep mystical experience.

See also: **ruah ha-kodesh** (8.1).

1. *E.g. Psalms* 103:1, 105:2–4.
2. Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW* p.182.
3. *Exodus* 6:2–3.
4. Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Megillat ha-Megillah, MMAH* p.43.
5. Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW* p.182.
6. Judah Halevi, *Kūzārī* 4:15, *SKJH*, in *TSSW* p.183.
7. *Cf. Psalms* 73:21.
8. *Jeremiah* 20:9.
9. Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines, TSSW* p.185.
10. *Psalms* 16:8.
11. Raymond P. Scheindlin, “Redemption of the Soul,” *RSRP* p.64.
12. *Cf. Judah Halevi, Kūzārī* 5:23, *SKJH*.

shífù (C) *Lit.* eat, meal, food (*shí*) + belly (*fù*); an expression often translated as ‘fill the belly’ or ‘fill the stomach’; to fill one’s inner being. *Fùshí*, which reverses the two Chinese characters comprising the word, means ‘full belly’ or ‘full stomach’.

In Daoism, *shífù* refers either to a teacher who provides spiritual sustenance in order to promote spiritual health, or to a disciple who fills the mind (*xīn*) with spirituality in order to transform their human mind (*rénxīn*) into the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*). In the latter case, *shífù* is most often seen in association with *xūxīn* (emptying the mind), as in the expression ‘empty the mind (*xūxīn*, *xū qí xīn*) and fill the belly (*shífù*, *shí qí fù*)’. As Shuǐjīngzǐ (Zhào Yīmíng, *fl.* C16th) explains, a prerequisite of spirituality is to empty the mind of all desires and extraneous thoughts and to see the presence of the spirit (the “sun”) within the material body (“the moon”). Only then can the mind be filled with awareness of the spirit – the “golden lead” or “elixir”:

See through the illusions of life and understand their emptiness –
for the sun hides within the bright moon.

If human beings understand the principles of *yīn* and *yáng*,
then they can master the foundation of heaven.

Empty your mind (*xūxīn*) and fill your belly (*shífù*)
to seek the golden lead –
within the moon you can clearly see the sun.
Open the pathway in which *yáng* rises and *yīn* descends,
then the elixir (*dān*) will emerge
and fragrance will cover your body.

Shuījīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (4) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM p.25

The expression *shí qí fù* first appears in the *Dàodé jīng* (c.C3rd BCE), and is often regarded as advice to wise worldly rulers, for whom the ideal is *wúwéi* (non-action), which implies natural, uncontrived, non-contentious, selfless action or ‘going with the flow’:

By bestowing no honours,
(the sage) keeps people from squabbling (due to jealousy);
By prizing no treasures,
he keeps people from stealing;
By displaying no objects of desire,
he keeps people’s minds (*xīn*) from disturbance.

Hence, the rule of the sage (*shèngrén zhī zhì*):
Empties the mind (*xū qí xīn*),
but fills the stomach (*shí qí fù*);
Weakens the will,
but strengthens the bones (the foundation).

He always keeps people protected from knowledge and desire,
and those who scheme from daring to act.
So by non-action (*wúwéi*) good order prevails.

Dàodé jīng 3; cf. TTRP p.6

While the passage is frequently taken to mean that a wise ruler should ensure that he rules over well-fed and happy subjects, it is also interpreted in the light of esoteric Daoist practices to mean, for example, filling various bodily organs with *qì* (subtle life energy) – the belly being associated with the *qìhǎi* (ocean of *qì*). A present-day Daoist comments:

On the most basic level, this passage emphasizes living closer to necessity and sustenance. However, from a Daoist perspective, ‘governing the country (*zhìguó*)’ also relates to ‘governing (or healing) the body-self (*zhìshēn*)’. To empty the mind (*xīn*) is to decrease

excessive intellectual and emotional activity; to fill the belly (*fù* also refers to the lower abdominal region) is to increase the *qì* stored in the body's centre.

Louis Komjathy, HDP2 p.37

Thomas Cleary, introducing his translation of *Wùzhēn zhízhǐ* ('Straightforward Instructions on the Awakening to Reality'), expresses his understanding of the expression:

An analogous meaning of 'emptying the mind and filling the belly' is to put aside preconceptions and become open to guidance. This again may be represented as *yīn* obeying *yáng*, and refers both to the relationship between learner and teacher, and to the relationship between the learner and Reality.

Yet another meaning of 'emptying the mind and filling the belly' is to refrain from arbitrary thought and action in order to accumulate energy simply by not dissipating energy. This was also practised in *Chán* Buddhism, where it was referred to as gaining power by saving power. In Daoism, not only was this regarded as an important practice for physical health, it was also considered essential to accumulate energy in order to make positive use of the impact of the teaching. So again, *yīn* and *yáng*, emptiness and fullness, receptivity and creativity are presented as complementary aspects of Daoist practice.

Thomas Cleary, Taoist Classics, TCC4 p.18

Shuījīngzǐ quotes earlier sages who make the same point using different expressions. He also emphasizes the need to obtain the guidance of an enlightened master:

The Confucian sages say: "When desire (*yù*) ceases, the way of heaven can flow." The Buddhists say: "There is neither delusion (*wú míng*; S. *avidyā*, spiritual ignorance) nor absence of delusion."¹ The Daoists say: "Empty the mind (*xū qí xīn*) and fill the belly (*shí qí fù*)." All are referring to the ways of contemplating (*guān*) emptiness (*kōng*). Contemplating emptiness is not just merely sitting still and stopping thinking. If you do not receive instructions from an enlightened teacher (*míngshī*), you will not know ... the sequence of events leading to the emergence of the spirit.

Shuījīngzǐ, Qīngjìng jīng (11) túzhù, ZW77; cf. CSTM pp.70–71

Over the many centuries since it was written, students of the *Dàodé jīng* have provided numerous commentaries on the expression. The military general and student of the *Dàodé jīng* Wáng Zhēn (fl.809) shares the earlier traditional

understanding that it refers to the political governance of the sage-ruler. He comments:

The sage empties the mind (*xū qí xīn*) of reasoning and delusion; he fills the stomach (*shí qí fù*) with loyalty and honesty. He weakens the will with humility and compliance, and he strengthens the bones with what the people already have within themselves.

Wáng Zhēn, Dàodé jīng lùnbīng yàoyì shù, DZ713, in TTRP p.6

Various shades of meaning have been given by different commentators. One of the earliest commentaries, the second-century *Xiǎng'ěr* attributed to Zhāng Lǚ, takes the character *qí* (his) to refer to the sage himself: “The sage regulates by emptying his mind and filling his belly (*shèngrén zhī zhì xū qí xīn shí qí fù*).” Here, the *Xiǎng'ěr* is taking *shèngrén zhī zhì* to mean ‘the sage regulates’ rather than ‘the sage governs’. Understanding ‘sage’ to mean a wise spiritual practitioner or one who disseminates spiritual teachings, the *Xiǎng'ěr* commentary says:

The mind (*xīn*) is a regulator. It may hold fortune or misfortune, good or evil. The belly (*fù*) is a ‘sack’ for the *Dào*; its life energy (*qì*) constantly wishes to fill it. When the mind produces inauspicious and evil conduct, the *Dào* departs, leaving the sack empty (*kōng*). Once it is empty (*kōng*), waywardness enters, (spiritually) killing the person. If one drives off the misfortune and evil in the mind, the *Dào* will return to it and the belly (*fù*) will be filled (*shí*).

Lǎozǐ xiǎng'ěr zhù, S6825; cf. EDSB p.78

The eleventh-century scholar Wáng Páng explains:

An empty mind (*xīnxū*) means no distinctions. A full stomach (*fùshí*) means no desires. A weak will means no external plans. Strong bones means standing on one’s own and remaining unmoved by outside forces.

Wáng Páng, Dàodé zhēnjīng jízhu, DZ706, in TTRP p.6

Lù Diàn, an eleventh-century master and commentator on the *Dàodé jīng*, says:

The mind knows and chooses, while the stomach (*fù*) does not know but simply contains. The will desires and moves, while bones do not desire but simply stand there. The sage empties what knows (*xū qí xīn*), and fills what does not know (*shí qí fù*); he weakens what desires, and strengthens what does not desire.

Lú Wéiyǒng, Dàodé zhēnjīng jīyì, DZ724; cf. in TTRP p.7

The classical scholar and philosopher Wú Chéng (C14th) agrees that “desiring external things” hinders spiritual progress:

Desiring external things harms our bodies (*shēn*). The sage nourishes his life energy (*qì*) by filling his stomach (*fù*), not by chasing material objects that please the eye. Hence, he chooses internal reality over external illusion.

Wú Chéng, *Dàodé zhēnjīng zhù*, DZ704; cf. in TTRP p.24

Master Zhāng Bóduān (C11th) interprets ‘belly’ as the ‘centre’, the inner core of one’s being. In alchemical symbolism, the “lead” of materiality is to be refined and transformed into the “gold” of spirituality:

The significance of emptying the mind (*xūxīn*) and filling the belly (*shífù*, the centre of one’s being) are both profound. Because in order to empty the mind, it is necessary to know the mind. To refine lead, it is better first to fill the belly (*shífù*) and fill the room (*i.e.* the spiritual centre) brimful with gold.

Zhāng Bóduān, *Wùzhēn piān*, DZ141

In one of his ‘twenty-four student essentials’, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) offers students of the *Dào* advice similar to that of the *Dàodé jīng*:

Seek a master (*shī*)
and keep the company of friends (like-minded people).
Empty your mind (*xūxīn*),
so that your inner being can be filled (*shífù*).
If you are full of self (*zì*),
you will grow old with no achievement.

Liú Yīmíng, *Xué rén èrshí sì yào* 4, in *Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě*, ZW266, DS12

In his commentary on master Zhāng Bóduān’s (C11th) *Wùzhēn piān* (‘Treatise on Awakening to Reality’), master Liú Yīmíng explains the metaphorical meaning of the expression and its significance in *nèidān* (inner alchemy), also called *jīndān dào* or *jīndān zhī dào* (way of the gold elixir). The gold elixir symbolizes one’s innate spiritual awareness:

The way of the gold elixir (*jīndān zhī dào*) involves two activities: to empty the mind (*xūxīn*) and to fill the belly (*shífù*).

‘Emptying the mind (*xūxīn*)’ means to empty the human mind (*xū rén xīn*) – this is to cultivate one’s (true) nature (*xiū xìng*).

‘Filling the belly (*shífù*)’ means to realize the mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*) – this is to cultivate one’s (true spiritual) life (*xiū mìng*).

The two activities – emptying the mind (*xūxīn*) and filling the belly (*shífù*) – both have profound significance in developing one's (true) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*).

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

Master Liú Yīmíng goes on to say that to empty the mind, it is necessary to understand that there is a lower 'human mind' and a higher 'mind of *Dào*'. Once this has been understood, it is necessary only to concentrate on refining the *Dào* mind (*dàoxīn*), since this will naturally cause the human mind (*rénxīn*) to empty, on the principle that attachment to something greater automatically leads to detachment from something lesser:

To empty the mind (*xūxīn*), it is necessary to know the mind, since there is the human mind (*rénxīn*) and there is the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*). The human mind (*rénxīn*) should be empty, not full. The mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) should be full, not empty. If you empty the mind without distinguishing between true and false, right and wrong, then neither (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) nor your (original) nature (*xìng*) can be comprehended.

Once (this differentiation within) the mind is understood, you do not need to empty the human mind (*rénxīn*). First you should refine the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*), ... to fill the belly (*shífù*). When the belly is full (*fùshí*), positive energy will grow through the accumulation of right actions, secondary energies will automatically fade out, and the human mind (*rénxīn*) will automatically become empty. Then the four forms (*i.e.* the body) will be unified, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) will be collected closely together, gold and jade (*i.e.* spirituality) will fill the court, and the treasure of life will be in your hands. This is the way to empty the human mind (*xū rén xīn*), nurture the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*), understand your original nature, and return to the home of Emptiness.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

In practice, the emptying and filling go on simultaneously; 'filling the belly' presupposes emptying the mind, and *vice versa*:

Clearly, if the mind has not been emptied, the belly cannot be filled (*shífù*); so it is proper to empty the mind (first).

Liú Yīmíng, Kǒngyì (49, 50) chǎnzhēn, Záguà zhuàn, ZW246

And:

One may fill the belly (*shífù*) first and then empty the mind (*xūxīn*), or one may empty the mind first, then fill the belly. By using both

emptying (*xū*) and filling (*shí*), the path of action and non-action will reach its consummation, and the practice of nurturing righteousness will be completed.

Liú Yǐmíng, Kǒngyì (28, 27) chǎnzhēn, Záguà zhuàn, ZW246

In a collection of his recorded discourses, master Mǎ Yù (C12th) recalls the dedicated efforts of the twelfth-century master Liú Biàngōng (*aka.* Gāoshàng, ‘the Sublime’), an advanced spiritual practitioner famed for having spent many years in secluded meditation, absorbing himself in the *Dào*. Master Liú Biàngōng had

lived forty years in a small meditation hut (*huándǔ*). He did nothing other than simply empty his mind (*xū qí xīn*) and fill his belly (*shí qí fù*). He detached himself from all finery, forgot about fame, discarded personal advantage (*lì*), purified his spirit, and kept his *qì* (life energy) whole. His spiritual practice bore fruit, and his (spiritual) immortality was automatically attained.

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 8b

See also: **huándǔ, xūxīn.**

1. *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra, T8 251:848c13.*

shijō (J) *Lit.* a period of *zazen* meditation. *Zazen* sessions in a *zendō* (*Zen* meditation hall) are initiated by the *jikijitsu* (monastic supervisor) sounding a small bell (*inkin*, a bowl and striker) and/or wooden clappers (*taku*) a certain number of times. During the period of *zazen*, complete silence and absolute bodily stillness is observed. After the designated period is completed, the *jikijitsu* sounds the bell or clappers once more to signal the start of *kinhin* (walking meditation). *Kinhin* is intended to relieve any bodily tension or pain that may have built up while sitting still, and the time can also be used for a bathroom break. A further sounding of the bell or clapper signals the end of the *zazen* session, which is often followed by a *teishō* or *Zen dharma* talk, usually a commentary or explanation of a *Zen* text by the resident *Zen rōshi* (master).

See also: **zazen.**

shikantaza (J), **zhǐguǎn dǎzuò** (C) *Lit.* nothing but (*shikan*) just (*ta*) sitting (*za*); just sitting, nothing more; only attending to sitting; focusing exclusively on sitting; sitting in awareness; *zazen* (sitting meditation) performed in a state

of heightened alertness and attention that is free of thoughts, conceptions, images and expectations, and uses no objects, devices or techniques, such as *kōan* contemplation or counting breaths, that are intended to trigger enlightenment; a *Sōtō Zen* practice, introduced to Japan in the thirteenth century by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the founder of *Sōtō Zen*, who studied in China with Tiāntóng Rújìng of the *Cáodòng* school, which was founded in the ninth century; based upon the *mòzhào Chán* (silent illumination meditation) of the *Cáodòng* school; Dōgen's name for his version of the practice of *mòzhào Chán* (C). Japanese has many words that are phonetically rendered as *shikan*. The *shikan* of *shikantaza* should not be confused with the *shikan* that renders the Chinese *zhǐguān*, meaning calmness (*zhǐ*) and contemplation (*guān*), and is a term used for a form of meditation practised by the *Tendai* (C. *Tiāntái*) school.

Mòzhào Chán is founded on the *Mahāyāna* teaching of *tathāgata-garbha*, which teaches that the *buddha*-nature is present in all beings and all things, and that enlightenment is the inherently natural state of mind. Consequently, all that a meditator has to do is to relinquish all striving, and permit his enlightened state of mind to come to the fore – to allow his *buddha*-nature to manifest, rather than strive to attain buddhahood. *Shikantaza* does not bring the spiritually ignorant to enlightenment; rather it permits the already enlightened to realize their innate enlightenment. According to Dōgen, resting in a state of mindful, alert and wakeful brightness is the epitome of the *zazen* practised by all *buddhas*.

Mòzhào Chán is commonly contrasted with *kānhuà Chán* (J. *kannazen*), which is contemplation of a *kōan* (C. *gōng àn*), pioneered by the Chinese *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) school, and exported to Japan by Myōan Eisai (1141–1215). In the same way, discussion concerning the relative merits of *shikantaza* and *kannazen* have prevailed between the Japanese *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools since their earliest days, reflecting to some extent the criticisms of *mòzhào Chán* made by the Chinese master Dàhuì Zōnggǎo (1089–1163) of the *Línjì* school. Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768), Japanese reformer and revitalizer of the *Rinzai* school who systematized *kōan* practice in a manner still used today, and the renowned twentieth-century scholar D.T. Suzuki have both critiqued Dōgen's *shikantaza* as quietism, negativism and mental stasis, praising instead the mental power and spiritual insight claimed for *kōan* meditation.

However, although scholars commonly see controversy between the two schools, Dōgen himself does not altogether decry the benefits of *kōan* contemplation. In fact, many things attributed by the *Sōtō* school to Dōgen may not have originated with him, but have been later accretions.¹ Dōgen does point out, however, when asked by his disciple Kōun Ejō concerning the value of *zazen* in relation to the study of *kōans* and other recorded sayings of past masters, that it is the sitting in meditation that produces the results, not the study of the *kōan*:

We may seem to get some understanding by looking at the stories of the *kōan*, but this will actually lead us away from the path of the *buddhas* and patriarchs. If we just pass the time in upright sitting, with nothing to be gained and nothing to be realized, this is the patriarchal path. The ancients may have recommended both looking at words (*kannazen*) and just sitting, but still it was sitting that they especially recommended. And while there have been those who achieved awakening through a story, this too was made possible by virtue of their sitting. The real virtue lies in the sitting.

Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki, Dōgen Zenji Zenshū,

DZZ2 p.494, in DMZM p.155

In his *Shōbōgenzō* ('Treasury of the True Dharma Eye'), Dōgen explains that *shikantaza* is not to be seen as a method of attaining enlightenment; it is enlightenment itself – a way of simply expressing and realizing one's innate *buddha*-nature. A person sits in *zazen* with constant awareness, and with the faith and certainty that he is already a *buddha*. The process is one of self-forgetfulness in which the *buddha*-nature gradually unfolds its infinite potential throughout one's life. Dōgen taught that moral training, meditation and enlightenment are three facets of this single process. All is *buddha*, and one has only to realize what one is. In the *Shōbōgenzō*, he describes *zazen* and *shikantaza* as "The meditative state (J. *zammai*, S. *samādhi*) that is the lord of meditative states". It is a process of "getting free of body and mind (J. *shinjin datsuraku*)", which means to be so focused within one's own being that the body becomes utterly still and all mental activity ceases. Body and mind have thus then been 'shed' and cause no further disturbance. When this happens, the original face (J. *honrai menmoku*, C. *běnlái miànmù*) of natural and innate enlightenment manifests.² This, says Dōgen, is the real teachings of the Buddha – the *buddhadharma*.

The eye is a metaphor for wisdom, and in one passage Dōgen describes his teacher's ability to sit in the *buddhas'* and ancestors' place and to see through their eyes:

My late master (Tiāntóng Rújìng), an eternal *buddha*, once said: "Practising *zazen* is getting free of body and mind (*shinjin datsuraku*). You can attain this through the practice of *shikantaza* alone. You don't have to offer incense, do prostrations, practise visualizations, chant the *nembutsu* (name of the Buddha Amitābha), repent of anything, or read the *sūtras*." It is clear that over the last four or five hundred years, only my late master has gouged out the (wisdom) eye of the *buddhas* and patriarchs and just sat within that eye. There have been few in China who have stood head and shoulders with him. Few have realized that just sitting there

(*zazen*) is the *buddhadharma*, and the *buddhadharma* is just sitting there (*zazen*).

Eihei Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, *Zammai-ō Zammai*, T82 2582:243c;
cf. *STHT* (69) p.779, *SDT3* (72) p.372, in *OHTU* pp.178–79

Some modern *Zen* teachers, especially in the West, having identified the main forms of *Zen* meditation, have incorporated them into one system. Thus, Rōshi Robert Aitken (1917–2010) speaks of *shikantaza* as one of three primary practices available to *Zen* students. These are *kōan* contemplation, *shikantaza*, and mindfulness through the recitation of *gāthās* (songs) and *mantras*, which includes counting the breaths (*sūsokukan*):

These three ways inform each other, and can be combined or blended. The choice of one of these options, or two or three of them together – reflects the *karma*, personality and aspiration of both student and teacher.

Rōshi Robert Aitken, *Future of Zen Buddhism in the West*, FZBW

Because the mind is habitually active, always thinking and imagining things, *Zen* masters rarely start by recommending *shikantaza* to beginners. They know that a volume of distracted thoughts will rapidly overwhelm any attempt to sit with a still mind. Therefore they prescribe counting the breathing or reflection on a *kōan* as preliminary exercises, which absorb some of the mental activity and help to create the focus required for *shikantaza*. Rōshi Philip Kapleau (1912–2004), a Western *Zen* teacher who also combined elements of the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* traditions, explains:

Because today, *Zen* masters claim, devotees are on the whole much less zealous for truth, and because the obstacles to practise (posed by the complexities of modern life) are more numerous, capable *Sōtō* masters seldom assign *shikantaza* to a beginner. They prefer to have him first unify his mind through concentration on counting the breath; or where a burning desire for enlightenment does exist, to exhaust the discursive intellect through the imposition of a special type of *Zen* problem (*i.e.* a *kōan*), and thus prepare the way for *kenshō* (J. seeing one's nature, initial insight).

By no means, then, is the *kōan* system confined to the *Rinzai* sect as many believe. Yasutani Rōshi is only one of a number of *Sōtō* masters who use *kōans* in their teaching. Genshū Watanabe Rōshi, the former abbot of Sōji-ji, one of the two head temples of the *Sōtō* sect, regularly employed *kōans*, and at the *Sōtō* monastery of Hōsshin-ji, of which the illustrious Harada Rōshi was abbot during his lifetime, *kōans* are also widely used.

Even Dōgen himself . . . disciplined himself in *kōan Zen* for eight years before going to China and practising *shikantaza*. And though, upon his return to Japan, Dōgen wrote at length about *shikantaza* and recommended it for his inner band of disciples, it must not be forgotten that these disciples were dedicated truth-seekers for whom *kōans* were an unnecessary encouragement to sustained practice. Notwithstanding this emphasis on *shikantaza*, Dōgen made a compilation of three hundred well-known *kōans*,³ to each of which he added his own commentary. From this and the fact that his foremost work, the *Shōbōgenzō* ('Treasury of True Dharma Eye'), contains a number of *kōans*, we may fairly conclude that he did utilize *kōans* in his teaching.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK pp.8–9

In one of his familiarization lectures, Hakuun Ryōko Yasutani (1885–1973) describes the nature of *shikantaza* to a group of students:

Up to now you have been concentrating on following your breaths with your mind's eye, trying to experience vividly the inhaled breath as only inhaled breath and the exhaled breath as only exhaled breath. From now on I want you to practise *shikantaza*. . . It is neither usual nor desirable to change so quickly from these different exercises, but I have followed this course in order to give you a taste of the different modes of concentration. After these introductory lectures are completed and you come before me singly, I will assign you a practice corresponding to the nature of your aspiration as well as to the degree of your determination, that is to say, the practice of counting or following your breaths, *shikantaza*, or a *kōan*.

This lecture will deal with *shikantaza*. *Shikan* means 'nothing but' or 'just', while *ta* means 'to hit' and *za* 'to sit'. Hence, *shikantaza* is a practice in which the mind is intensely involved in just sitting. In this type of *zazen*, it is all too easy for the mind, which is not supported by such aids as counting the breath or by a *kōan*, to become distracted. The correct temper of mind therefore becomes doubly important. Now, in *shikantaza*, the mind must be unhurried yet at the same time firmly planted or massively composed, like Mount Fuji let us say. But it must also be alert, stretched, like a taut bowstring. So *shikantaza* is a heightened state of concentrated awareness wherein one is neither tense nor hurried, and certainly never slack. It is the mind of somebody facing death. Let us imagine that you are engaged in a duel of swordsmanship of the kind that used to take place in ancient Japan. As you face your opponent you are unceasingly watchful, set, ready. Were you to relax your vigilance even momentarily, you would be cut down instantly. A crowd gathers to see the fight. Since you are not

blind, you see them from the corner of your eye, and since you are not deaf you hear them. But not for an instant is your mind captured by these sense impressions.

This state cannot be maintained for long – in fact, you ought not to do *shikantaza* for more than half an hour at a sitting. After thirty minutes get up and walk around in *kinhin* (walking meditation), and then resume your sitting. If you are truly doing *shikantaza*, in half an hour you will be sweating, even in winter in an unheated room, because of the heat generated by this intense concentration. When you sit for too long your mind loses its vigour, your body tires, and your efforts are less rewarding than if you had restricted your sitting to thirty-minute periods.

Compared with an unskilled swordsman a master uses his sword effortlessly. But this was not always the case, for there was a time when he had to strain himself to the utmost, owing to his imperfect technique, to preserve his life. It is no different with *shikantaza*. In the beginning, tension is unavoidable; but with experience this tense *zazen* ripens into relaxed yet fully attentive sitting. And just as a master swordsman in an emergency unsheathes his sword effortlessly and attacks single-mindedly, just so the *shikantaza* adept sits without strain – alert and mindful. But do not for one minute imagine that such sitting can be achieved without long and dedicated practice.

Hakuin Ryōko Yasutani, Introductory Lectures on Zen, in TPZK pp.53–54

Like all forms of meditation, persistence and daily practice is required. The *Sōtō Zen* teacher Shunryu Suzuki (1904–1971) writes:

Our *Sōtō* way puts an emphasis on *shikantaza* or ‘just sitting’. Actually we do not have any particular name for our practice; when we practise *zazen* we just practise it, and whether we find joy in our practice or not, we just do it. Even though we are sleepy, and we are tired of practising *zazen*, of repeating the same thing day after day; even so, we continue our practice. Whether or not someone encourages our practice, we just do it.

Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind – Beginner’s Mind, ZMBM p.72

Rōshi Kapleau describes the practice of *shikantaza*:

Shikantaza is the purest kind of *zazen*, the practice emphasized by the *Sōtō* sect of *Zen*. Counting the breath and following the breath are expedient devices. A person who can’t walk well requires support and all these other methods are such supports. But eventually you must dispense with them and just walk. *Shikantaza* is *zazen* in which you

mind, intensely involved in just sitting, has nothing to lean on; hence it is a very difficult practice. In counting or following the breath with the mind's eye, you soon know it if you are not doing them properly, but in *shikantaza* it is easy to become lax, since you have no gauges by which to check yourself.

How you sit in *shikantaza* is of vital importance. The back must be straight and the mind taut – ever watchful. The centre of gravity should be in the region just below the navel. If you can, sit with your legs crossed in the full- or half-lotus posture and you will have absolute stability and equilibrium as well as the dignity and grandeur of a *buddha*...

A sagging body creates a sagging mind, and *vice versa*. The mind must be thoroughly alert, yet not tense. If you look at the picture of Bodhidharma painted by Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506) and carefully study the eyes, you will see what I mean. Bodhidharma is doing *shikantaza*. This is the degree of alertness required: if you were sitting in one corner of a room doing *shikantaza* and a door on the other side was quietly opened half an inch, you would know it instantly.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK pp.125–26, 132

When answering questions, he gives some individually oriented indications of when to use the three forms of meditation:

STUDENT: I don't see the connection between counting the breaths and *shikantaza*.

RŌSHI: They are two different things, why look for a connection? Is your difficulty that you find counting your breaths too mechanical and uninteresting?

STUDENT: Yes, I suppose that's it.

RŌSHI: There are many like you. Instead of counting your breaths or doing *shikantaza*, it may be better for you to ponder a question like "What am I?" or "Where did I come from?" or "Buddhism teaches that we are all innately perfect; in what way am I perfect?" The technical *Zen* designation for such questions is *honrai no menmoku* (one's original face, one's true nature) – "What was my face before my parents were born?"

STUDENT: Is that a *kōan*?

RŌSHI: Yes. Hereafter stop counting your breaths and devote yourself earnestly to this *kōan*.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK p.130

RŌSHI: Are you able to do *shikantaza* well?

STUDENT: No, not well at all.

RŌSHI: In that case you should go back to the exercise of following the breath until you are able to do it well, after which you may return to *shikantaza*.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK p.123

STUDENT: I want to ask you whether I can count my breath and do *shikantaza* at the same time.

RŌSHI: No, you cannot. You can just count your breath for half the period of your sitting and practise *shikantaza* the other half, but you can't do them simultaneously.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK p.127

See also: **kānhuà Chán, kōan, mòzhào Chán, zhǐguān.**

1. See *e.g.* Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, DMZM pp.133–70.
2. See Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, DMZM p.125.
3. Eihei Dōgen, *Nempyō Sambyaku Soku* ('Three Hundred Kōans with Commentaries').

shíqì (C) *Lit.* to eat (*shí*) life energy (*qì*); to ingest *qì*; a synonym for *fúqì*. See **fúqì**.

shíyuè wēnyǎng (C) *Lit.* ten (*shí*) months (*yuè*) warm (*wēn*) nurturing (*yǎng*); ten months of incubation; the incubation period (in lunar months) of a human foetus. In Daoism, particularly in the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, *shíyuè* carries a symbolic meaning similar to *jiǔnián* (nine years), and refers to the maturation ('gestation') period of spiritual practice, whatever length of time that may be for each practitioner.

In the poetry of master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th), the final stages of spiritual practice are likened to the gestation and birth of a human baby. Just as the potential for a baby is present in the fertilized ovum, so is the potential for full spiritual realization (the "elixir") present in the depths of every human being:

Emerging from the womb (*tuōtāi*, to shed one's body)
 in ten months (*shíyuè*), the practice of the elixir (*dān*) is complete.
 In infant form,
 you begin to pay respects to the spiritual skies.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains the symbolism:

The term ‘ten months (*shíyuè*)’ refers to the time period for the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) to develop and transform, just like the ten (lunar) months of human pregnancy before a baby is born. . . . ‘Ten months incubation (*shíyuè wēnyǎng*)’ and ‘nine years facing a wall (*jiǔnián miànbì*)’ mean the same thing; they are not different things. They are both symbolic representations used by the ancients.

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

See also: **jiǔhuán** (8.1), **jiǔnián, miànbì**.

shmāshāna (S), **dur khrod** (T) *Lit.* cemetery, graveyard, cremation ground, charnel ground. See **sīvathikā-manasikāra**.

shōuxīn (C) *Lit.* to collect (*shōu*) the mind (*xīn*); to restrain, to tame, to gather, or to control the mind; meditative concentration.

In his *Discourse on Sitting in Forgetfulness*,¹ master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) divides the process of meditation into seven steps: respect and faith, interception of *karma*, taming the mind (*shōuxīn*), detachment from affairs, true contemplation, intense concentration, and realization of the *Dào*. Regarding the third step of taming the mind, he says that it requires the practitioner to overcome the impurities and distractions of the mind:

When calm, the mind gives rise to wisdom (*huì*); when agitated, to confusion (*hūn*). Delightedly roaming in the realm of delusion (*huànjìng*, land of fantasy, fairyland), it mistakes delusion for reality and greatly enjoys being in the midst of activity. Who will awaken (*wù*) to see this as empty (*xū*) and wrong?

When you realize that your discomfort is largely due to your place of residence, you choose a new neighbourhood, and go to live there; soon you see a great improvement. Similarly, by choosing your friends carefully, the benefit is even greater. How much more, then, does this process apply when the personal body leaves the realm of birth and death, and the mind comes to dwell in the centre of perfect *Dào*? Without giving up the former, how can you ever attain the latter?

Therefore, when you first begin to cultivate the *Dào*, you must sit quietly and tame your mind (*shōuxīn*). Leaving all grossness behind, dwelling in nothingness (*wúsuǒyǒu*), unattached even to the slightest thing, you will automatically enter the Void (*xūwú*). Then the mind (*xīn*) will become one with the *Dào*. . . . On the other hand, when you let your mind and spirit become defiled, if the obscuring overgrowth becomes thicker and wilder day by day, then you move away from the *Dào*.

Scrubbing away the impurities of the mind, opening up consciousness of the root of the spirit is what we call cultivation of the *Dào*. No more uncertain drifting – but mystical harmony with the *Dào*. Resting quietly within the *Dào* is called returning to the root. Guarding the root and never leaving it is called tranquillity and concentration. When these increase daily, (spiritual) diseases are dispelled and (spiritual) life (*mìng*) is regained. Continuous recovery leads to spontaneous knowledge of the eternal. ‘Knowledge’ here means that nothing is left unclear; ‘eternal’ means that nothing changes or perishes anymore. In this way, an end to (the cycle of) birth and death is truly found.

Following the *Dào* and calming the mind (*ānxīn*) therefore ultimately depend upon freedom from attachment. As the *Dàodé jīng* puts it:

All things flourish, but each returns to its root.
 To return to the Root means stillness (*jìng*) –
 it is called recovering one’s (true spiritual) life (*mìng*).
 Recovering one’s (true spiritual) life
 is to find the eternal (*cháng*).
 To know the eternal is enlightenment (*míng*).²

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn* 3, DZ1036 2b–3b, JY213; cf. SSTK pp.87–89

Nothing negative, he continues, should be allowed to take root in the mind:

Only a motionless mind that is fully detached from all things can be the proper foundation of true concentration. . . . However, if you give free rein to all that arises in the mind and do not attempt to tame (*shōu*) and control (*zhì*) it, then you are really no different from ordinary people. . . . If there is some ongoing affair to attend to or some significant doubt about the method, you should rely on intelligent reasoning to resolve the situation or alleviate your doubts. This will give rise to wisdom (*huì*) and will further strengthen the basis of practice. Once understanding is reached, you must no longer generate thoughts. This is because thoughts will cause knowledge (*zhì*) to harm tranquillity, *i.e.* make the offshoot injure the root. Though you may hasten to gain an hour’s superiority, you will thereby get involved with another myriad generations of *karma* (*yè*).

Any confused waywardness or disturbing fantasy should be eliminated as soon as you become aware of it. Upon hearing slander or praise, or anything good or bad, you should just radically remove it, and not let the mind entertain it at all. When the mind is full, the *Dào* cannot enter. Whatever you may see or hear, it should be as if you had never seen or heard anything. Then right and wrong and good and evil cannot enter the mind.

When the mind does not receive anything external, we call it an empty mind. When it does not pursue anything external, we call it a mind at peace. In a mind at peace that is always kept empty, the *Dào* will come to stay quite automatically. As the *Nèiguān jīng* has it: “When someone is able to keep his mind empty and abide in non-action (*wúwéi*), without his even wishing for the *Dào*, the *Dào* will automatically come to him.”³

Then, internally, there is nothing that the mind is attached to; externally, there is nothing you would actively do. You are no longer either pure or impure, which is why slander and praise can no longer arise. You are neither wise nor ignorant, which is why gain and loss no longer effects you. If things are stable, you remain constant within that framework. If circumstances are shifting, you fluctuate with events. Such is the basic wisdom of avoiding all attachments (*léi*)...

The mind is like the eyes. When even a tiny speck of dust gets into them, they are no longer at rest. Likewise, when a minor affair concerns the mind, it automatically becomes agitated and confused; and once the disease of agitation is there, it is very difficult to enter a state of concentration. Therefore, the central point in cultivating the *Dào* lies in the extinction of such diseases...

It is like a fertile field. As long as thorns and brambles are not cut down, you may sow as many seeds as you want, but fresh shoots will not grow. Attachments, opinions, thoughts, and worries are the thorns and brambles of the mind. As long as they are not cut down, concentration and insight cannot grow.

Again, as long as you live in wealth and high position or are a scholar of the classics and of history, you may speak very well with compassion and restraint, but your actions will be greedy and ruthless. Eloquent enough to disguise falseness, powerful enough to awe others, someone like this will credit successes entirely to himself while blaming all failures on others. A disease like this is very serious, and study alone will not help. Its underlying cause is self-righteousness.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn* 3, *DZ1036 3b–5a*, *JY213*; cf. *SSTK* pp.89–91

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn goes on to compare the taming of the mind to the taming and training of animals and birds. By persistently persuading the mind not to run after outer things, the mind will eventually find peace within itself, without the need for any external input:

Since the mind has always been in the realm of dependence, it is entirely unaccustomed to standing alone. If it suddenly finds itself without support, it will hardly feel peaceful within itself. Even if peace is found momentarily, the mind will again revert to uncertainty and confusion. Whatever arises in the mind must be controlled (*zhì*) – you

must by all means bring it to a state of immobility. Then, after a long time, it will eventually comply and will automatically attain peace and repose. Independent of day or night, of walking, standing, sitting, lying down, or attending to your duties, you must constantly remain intent on keeping the mind at peace. . . .

Very gradually the mind will become compliant and docile, always increasing in limpidity and detachment. What it once loved dearly in its worldly life, it now rejects as low and vulgar. How much closer, now that concentration has arisen and insight deepened, has it come to distinguish between true and apparent reality!

Oxen and horses are domestic animals. When they are left to themselves and are not tamed (*bùshōu*), they soon become stubborn and do not accept being harnessed to a cart. Goshawks and merlins are wild birds, but if they are tied and fettered by man, kept close to the hand every day, they automatically get used to it. How much more than these does the mind (*xīn*), when allowed to run wild and uncontrolled (*bùshōu*), increase in coarseness and crassness? How then could it ever be able to “contemplate (*guān*) the profound (*miào*)”⁷⁴

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 3, DZ1036 5a–b, JY213; cf. SSTK pp.91–92

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn is referring to the first chapter of the *Dàodé jīng*. Alluding to the same passage, master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th) similarly counsels restraint of the mind:

Every nibble or nap is a source of gain or loss. Every word or deed is a cause of fortune or misfortune. Rather than cleverly controlling the outcome, it is better to remain innocently with the Source. Contemplating (*guān*) the Source and knowing the outcome is not a matter of impulsive passion. Control the mind (*shōuxīn*), simplify your affairs, reduce your activities day by day, still the body, and empty the mind, then “you can contemplate (*guān*) the profound (*miào*).”

Zhāng Sānfēng Tàijí liàndān mǐjué, JH19

In addition to spiritual and mystical insights, controlling the mind leads automatically to an improvement in moral character. Hence, the distinguished and influential Neo-Confucian philosopher and scholar Zhū Xī (C12th) depicts the moral benefits of collecting and preserving the mind in a state of equilibrium. He says that through this practice one acquires a natural ability to discern right from wrong. In automatically doing only what is right, one adheres to nature’s principles:

If we can, at quiet moments in our daily life, determinedly collect the mind (*shōudé cǐxīn*) in the here and now, that is the equilibrium before feelings of pleasure, anger, sadness and delight arise,

and is in accord with the undifferentiated celestial law (*tiānlǐ*). Then, as things and events unfold, the mind (*xīn*) will automatically see what is right and what is wrong. What is right is in accord with the celestial law (*tiānlǐ*), and what is wrong is in violation of the law of heaven. If we are always able to collect the mind like this (*shōushídé zhèxīn*), it is as if we hold the scale and balance to measure things.

Zhū Xī, Yùzuǎn zhūzǐ quánshū, YYZQ 2:2a; cf. SBCP p.606

See also: **liànxīn, xiángxīn, xīnzhāi, xiūxīn, zhìxīn.**

1. See Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn*, *SSTK* pp.31–111, *TMED* pp.81–85.
2. *Dàodé jīng* 16.
3. *Nèiguān jīng*, *DZ64I* 4b.
4. *Cf. Dàodé jīng* 1.

shǒuyī, shǒudào (C) *Lit.* to guard (*shǒu*) the One (*yī*) or the *Dào*; to protect, preserve, maintain, keep watch over, or be present with the One or the *Dào*; also, a form of meditation in which the practitioner focuses the attention on a location or a deity within the body, with a view to becoming one with the *Dào*; sometimes rendered as ‘embrace the One’ and ‘embrace the *Dào*’, which are more correctly *bàoyī* and *bàodào*.

Since at least the fourth century BCE, *shǒuyī* has been used in Daoist writings in reference to the cultivation of the *Dào*, to the practice of concentrated meditation on the *Dào*, to maintaining a constant, singular, focused awareness of the One (the *Dào*). The ‘Inner Training’ chapter of the *Book of Master Guān* (C4th BCE) is the earliest extant mention of the practice:¹

When you enlarge your mind and let go of it,
 when you relax your *qì* and expand it,
 when your body is calm and unmoving,
 and you can preserve the One (*shǒuyī*)
 and discard the myriad disturbances –
 Then you will see a profit and not be enticed by it,
 you will see harm and not be frightened by it.

Relaxed and unwound,
 yet acutely sensitive in solitude,
 you delight in your own being.
 This is called ‘revolving the life energy (*qì*)’,
 and your thoughts and deeds seem heavenly.

Nèiyè, in Guānzǐ (49) 16:8b; cf. OTIT (24:1–10) p.92

Qì refers to the energy that gives rise to life and to existence, both in the cosmos and in the body. This energy has both macrocosmic and microcosmic aspects. *Qì* is a difficult word to translate because there is no equivalent concept in English that is encompassed by just one word.

In essence, this *qì* is the *dàoqì*, the energy of the *Dào* that creates and sustains all things. It is present in the deepest darkness and is shining brightly in the highest heavens. It comes to the awareness of one who has attained real inner virtue or power (*dé*). Then this *qì* may be happily received (“welcomed”) into awareness, and held onto with reverence. Knowledge of all things will then be attained:

Therefore this *qì* is:

bright, as if ascending the heavens,
dark, as if entering an abyss,
vast, as if dwelling in an ocean,
lofty, as if dwelling on a mountain peak.

Therefore, this *qì*:

Cannot be halted by force,
yet can be secured by inner power (*dé*);
Cannot be summoned by speech,
yet can be welcomed by sound (*yīn*).

Reverently hold (*shǒu*) onto it and do not lose (*shī*) it:

this is called ‘developing inner power (*dé*)’.

When inner power (*dé*) develops and wisdom (*zhì*) emerges,
the myriad things will be known and comprehended.

Nèiyè, in *Guānzǐ* (49) 16:1a–b; cf. *OTIT* (2:1–14) p.48

The unknown author of *Secret Instructions of the Holy Lord on the Tàipíng jīng* (C9th) – a collection of meditation methods found in the *Tàipíng jīng* (‘Scripture on Great Peace’, c.32 BCE) – discusses a method of meditation called *shǒuyī*, which is described as being “the root of long life”. In this form of meditation, the practitioner thinks of the three treasures (*sānbǎo*) – viz. *jīng-qì-shén* (vital essence, life energy, spirit) – as being already joined as one, and sits quietly with eyes closed. In the beginning, for as long as concentration is not attained, there is no light. However, with prolonged practice, light appears:

After practising being present with the One (*shǒuyī*) for a long time, brilliant light (*guāng*) will automatically appear. By the radiance (*zhāo*) of this light you will be able to see in all the four directions (*i.e.* everywhere). Submit to the light and you will travel afar (spiritually).

By it, the condition (*xíngróng*) of yourself and your body (*shēn*) will be fully revealed. The host of spirits will assemble. Thus you can transform (*huà*) your physical body into pure spirit (*shén*).

The practice of being present with the light of the One (*shǒuyī míng*) is the root of long life. With it, you can control the myriad spirits and go beyond all, through the brilliant gateway of light.

Practise being present with the One (*shǒuyī*) and concentrate on the light. It will first arise like fire. Be careful not to let it slip! The light will initially be red; with prolonged practice it will turn white. After another long period, it will be green. As you penetrate these lights, they will come nearer and nearer and eventually merge into one brilliance. Everything is illumined within; the hundred diseases are driven out. Guard it and never slacken! You will go beyond the world and ascend to heaven! . . .

The *dào* (method) of being present with the One (*shǒuyī*) applies as much today as it did in antiquity.

Tàipíng jīng shèngjūn mìzhǐ, DZ1102 1b–2a, 3b; cf. TEAK pp.195, 197

The author goes on to describe more fully the different colours of light that are inwardly perceived.

In the *Book of the Master who Embraces Simplicity*, master Gě Hóng (C4th CE) discusses at length this ‘One’ that is the *Dào*, speaking of its silence and invisibility and how – once it is known (*zhī*) – it should be meditated upon, preserved (*bǎo*) and guarded (*shǒu*), for it is the creator and the sustainer. The “three-in-one” in this context refers to heaven, earth, and human beings:

My teacher used to say:

If you can truly know the One (*zhīyī*),
the myriad affairs are done!²

“Knowing the One (*zhīyī*)” means there is not a single thing that remains unknown. Not knowing the One means that there is not a single thing that is truly known.

The *Dào* arises from the One; it is honoured without peer. Everything resides with the One and thereby reflects heaven, earth, and humanity. Thus we speak of the ‘Three-in-One’.

Heaven obtained the One and became pure. Earth obtained the One and became peaceful. Human beings obtained the One and came to life. Spirit obtained the One and became numinous. Metal sinks, feathers float, mountains loom, and rivers flow – all because of the One.

Yet we look at it and cannot see it; we listen for it and cannot hear it. Visualize it, and it is there; neglect it, and it is gone. Welcome it, and there is good fortune; turn your back on it, and there is bad luck.

Preserve (*bǎo*) it, and there is prosperity without end; lose it, and life declines, energy exhausted.

As the Venerable Lord (*Lǎojūn*) said:

Obscure it is! Abstruse! –
 yet in its midst, potential form.
 Abstruse it is! Obscure! –
 yet in its midst, potential things.³

That is exactly it. Also, the *Xiānjīng* ('Immortality Scripture')⁴ has:

If you desire to extend your life,
 guard the One (*shǒuyī*) and cultivate enlightenment.

Meditate on the One (*sīyī*)!
 In extreme hunger,
 the One will give you food.

Meditate on the One!
 In extreme thirst,
 the One will give you drink.

Gě Hóng, Bàopǔzǐ nàipiān 18, DZ1185 1a–b, JY144; cf. TEAK pp.198–99

Master Gě Hóng exhorts seekers to stay close to the One (*shǒuyī*) that holds power over life as well as death, which is like “a naked blade descending on your neck”. Like other mystical writers, he emphasizes not only grasping and holding onto the One, but also, if ultimate freedom is to be obtained, never losing awareness of it. He quotes his own master, whose “formula of the true One” is to guard the One so that the One will also guard you:

Do not relax, do not give in!
 Keep the One (*yī*) in its place!
 Do not dawdle, do not rush!
 Keep the One (*yī*) in its chamber!
 Once at ease and comfortable,
 the One (*yī*) will never leave.

Guard the One (*shǒuyī*), visualize the true One (*zhēnyī*),
 then the spirit world will be yours to peruse!
 Lessen desires, restrain your appetite,
 then the One (*yī*) will remain at rest!
 When a naked blade is descending on your neck –
 think of the One (*yī*) and you will live!

Knowing the One (yī) is easy –
the difficulty is dwelling in it forever!

Guard the One (shǒuyī) and never lose it!
Human limitations will not be for you!
On land, you are free from beasts;
in water, from fierce dragons!
No fear of evil sprites or phantoms,
no demon will approach, nor blade attack!

This is the great formula of the true One (zhēnyī). . . .

If you can guard the One (shǒuyī),
the One will also guard (shǒu) you.

Gě Hóng, Bàopǔzǐ nèipiān 18, DZ1185 2b–3b, JY144; cf. TEAK pp.202–3

In a similar manner, the author of *Scripture on the Three Primordial Realized Ones by the Lord of the Golden Tower* (C4th), one of the texts of the *Shàngqīng* school of Daoism, emphasizes keeping one's attention in and on the One "from beginning to end". Every thought and deed should be saturated with the One; this is the key to guarding the One:

Guard the One (shǒuyī),
and it will also guard you!
See the One,
and it will also see you!
Coming and going –
think of the One (niànyī)!
A thousand troubles, a myriad affairs –
think of the One!

Eating or drinking –
think of the One!
Happy and joyous –
think of the One!
Sad and anguished –
think of the One!
Suffering and sick –
think of the One!

In danger and hardship –
think of the One!
In water and fire –
think of the One!

In a carriage, on horseback –
 think of the One!
 In worry and agitation –
 think of the One!

To ‘think of the One (*niànyī*)’ means that you keep your attention on it from beginning to end. If your thoughts tend to be still too many, then double your concentration to think of the One (*yī*)!

Some people suffer because their determination is not strong. They cannot maintain the concentration for long. They know all the names of the One (*yī*), but cannot guard (*shǒu*) it. When they try to guard (*shǒu*) it, they cannot keep their minds on it firmly. Instead, they wallow in personal praise, forever unable to persevere in the practice. . . .

All rules about guarding the One (*shǒuyī*) warn sternly against lack of concentration. Yet even if there is concentration, there may be a lack of perseverance. And even if there is perseverance, there may be lack of intensity. In any such case, the Three Ones (*sānyī*) will depart. Then the body will be an empty house without a master. With such a disaster, how can you last long?

Jīnquē dìjūn sānyuán zhēnyī jīng, DZ253 3b–4a, TEAK pp.208–9

The “Three Ones” are the three primordial cosmogonic powers out of which all creation comes into being, as depicted in the *Dàodé jīng*.⁵ The unknown author of the *Scripture on the Immaculate Spirit* (C5th) also uses the similar term *niànyī* (thinking of the One). In this context, to “constantly think of the One” means constant awareness of the all-pervading One:

In all of your activities and in the thousand and one affairs and occupations, you must constantly think of the One (*niànyī*): whether eating or drinking, think of the One (*niànyī*); when feeling joyful, think of the One (*niànyī*); when afflicted, think of the One (*niànyī*); in sickness, think of the One (*niànyī*); if walking on water or within fire, think of the One (*niànyī*); in anxiety, think of the One (*niànyī*).

Sùlǐng jīng, DZ1314 30b–31a, in TMMS p.123

According to the *Scripture on Inner Contemplation* (C8th), it is easy to have some experience of the *Dào* and to make some progress in practice, stage by stage. But it is very difficult to guard or preserve it – that is, to unite permanently with the *Dào*:

Knowing the *Dào* is easy,
 trusting (*xìn*) the *Dào* is hard.

Trusting the *Dào* is easy,
 practising (*xíng*) the *Dào* is hard.
 Practising the *Dào* is easy,
 attaining (*dé*) the *Dào* is hard.
 Attaining the *Dào* is easy,
 preserving (*shǒu*) the *Dào* is hard.
 By preserving (*shǒu*) the *Dào* and never losing it,
 one will live forever (*cháng*).

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 6a, TMLT p.219

According to the *Scripture on Western Ascension* (C5th CE), when Lǎozǐ (c.C6th BCE) gave his last instruction to humanity before ‘leaving the world’ (on his way westward, according to the legend), he urged Yǐn Xǐ (the guardian of the pass) to learn how to ‘guard the One’:

Lǎozǐ said, “Xǐ, I tell you once again, Master Gǔ is my self. I shall now return in spirit and go back to the Nameless. I give up my self and end my existence; thereby I live continuously. I leave this world and return to the One Source.”

Suddenly, he was nowhere to be seen. In that moment, the office building was illuminated by a brilliance of five colours, simultaneously dark and yellow.

Yǐn Xǐ went out into the courtyard, bowed down, and said, “Please, dear spirit man, let me see you once again. Give me one more rule, so that I can guard the primordial Source (*shǒuyuán*) of it all.”

He then looked up and saw Lǎozǐ’s body sitting suspended in mid-air, several metres above the ground. He looked like a statue. The image appeared and disappeared, vague and indistinct (*huǎnghū*). His age did not seem to stay the same.

He said: “I will give you one more admonition, make sure you get it right: get rid of all impurity and stop your thoughts, calm your mind (*jìngxīn*), and guard the One (*shǒuyī*). When all impurities are gone, the myriad affairs are done. These are the essentials of my *Dào*.”

Finishing this admonition, the image vanished again. Yǐn Xǐ did not know where it had gone. He cried bitter tears and worshipped it in remembrance.

Then he retired from office on grounds of illness. He gave up all thinking and guarded the One (*shǒuyī*), and the myriad affairs were done.

Xīshēng jīng 39, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 6:14b–18a, TMPS pp.255–56

The expression ‘to guard the One until the myriad affairs are done’ encompasses two meanings. On the one hand, it implies keeping the mind and body still and empty in meditation, which eventually leads to oneness (*yī*) with the *Dào*, upon which the goal of spiritual practice and the primary purpose

or ‘affair’ of life has been accomplished. On the other hand, it suggests that when the *Dào* is always in mind, it is as if everything is done, but when the *Dào* is forgotten, it is as if nothing has been done.

In a poem she gave to her husband immediately prior to her death, master Cuī Shàoxuán (C9th) celebrates the eternally existent One, the *Dào*, which in reality needs no ‘guarding’:

Pervade the One (*tōng yú yī*)
 and all affairs are done!
 The One (*yī*) is the root,
 affairs are its gate.
 Affairs return to the One (*yī*),
 but the One (*yī*) exists in permanence.
 It exists, yet is not there –
 so we borrow a term and speak of ‘guard (*shǒu*)’.
 Just guard (*shǒu*) emptiness and nonbeing,
 and you will live forever!

Cuī Shàoxuán, “Dàdào shǒuyī bǎozhāng,”
 in Xuánzhū xīnjīng zhù, DZ574, JY204:4, TEAK p.218

Not fully understanding the poem, master Cuī Shàoxuán’s husband asked a certain Daoist master, Wáng Sǔnzhī, to explain it. Master Wáng Sǔnzhī wrote an explanatory text, which he called *Commentary on the Mysterious Pearl and the Mirror of the Mind*. In it he explains that the practitioner who can remain steadfast in daily guarding the One is strengthened and uplifted by the One. Ultimately he is enabled to rise above bodily limitations and ascend to the heaven of “Jade Clarity (*Yùqīng*)”:

Once you know the One, guard (*shǒu*) it steadfastly, and daily you will see the wonderful results like an echo following a sound, like a shadow following a shape.

Once you attain the Origin of the One (*yī zhī yuán*), embrace the Origin (*bàoyuán*) and guard the One (*shǒuyī*), you will find your *Dào* complete and your spirit powerful. You can then shake off your body and ascend yonder to Jade Clarity (*Yùqīng*), to the Centre of Great Mystery.

Wáng Sǔnzhī, Xuánzhū xīnjīng zhù, DZ574; cf. TEAK p.216

Master Wáng Sǔnzhī further explains that keeping the One (*Dào*) continuously in mind at all times – even in the midst of daily activities – creates detachment and awareness of the emptiness of phenomena. This leads to union with the original and eternally existent *Dào*:

Through guarding the One (*shǒuyī*) in all affairs, all efforts and merits return to the one original Energy (*yīhēi*). Then, the entire self

becomes one with emptiness, nonbeing, and the spontaneous flow of life. Shapeless, this one original Energy exists permanently. Yet, it is not really there to be grasped. Thus, we use the term ‘guard (*shǒu*)’ to describe the practice.

Guard (*shǒu*) emptiness (*xū*), nonbeing (*wú*), and the spontaneous flow of life (*zìrán*). Let your body and spirit become one with the *Dào*, and you can live forever as an immortal.

Wáng Sūnzhi, Xuánzhū xīnjìng zhù, DZ574, TEAK p.219

In the *Discourse Record of Perfected Jin*, master Jin Dàochéng (C12th) recalls similar words from his friend Wáng Zhé:

The master (Wáng Zhé) said, “Those engaged in cultivation practice (*xiūxíng*, spiritual practice) must first recognize that their (original) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*) are the ancestor and the patriarch. Only on their basis can you cultivate perfection and protect (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). This cultivation practice (*xiūxíng*) begins with preserving the three (*cúnsān*), embracing the Origin (*bàoyuán*), and guarding the One (*shǒuyī*).

“‘Preserving the three (*cúnsān*)’ means to work on the three real treasures (*zhēn sānbǎo*), viz. vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*). ‘Embracing the origin (*bàoyuán*)’ means to embrace (*bào*) and guard (*shǒu*) the original *yáng* and perfect *qì*. ‘Guarding the One (*shǒuyī*)’ means to guard the unified, numinous spirit.”

Jin Dàochéng, Jin zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1056 1a–b; cf. WCPK p.72

Master Wáng Zhé (C12th) similarly quotes Jin Dàochéng to explain that true spiritual merit is gained from being clear-minded, strong-willed and self-disciplined. Then one can ‘embrace the Origin’ or ‘guard the One’:

“If you want true merit, you must purify your mind, still (*dìng*) your will, and discipline your spirit and emotions. Without movement and without action, in true clarity and true purity, embrace the Origin (*bàoyuán*) and guard the One (*shǒuyī*), preserve your spirit and concentrate your life energy (*qì*).”⁶ This is true merit.

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng quánzhēn jí, DZ1153 10:21a; cf. in TPEQ p.31

In his *Book of Balance and Harmony*, master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) advises disciples to live in such a way as to ensure integration with the unifying principle within; to ‘embrace the Origin and guard the One’. He warns against thinking that a glimpse of the One is sufficient. The work must always continue, vigilance must be maintained, awareness of the One must continue to be guarded and preserved:

Embrace the Origin (*bàoyuán*), guard the One (*shǒuyī*),
 find the passage to the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*).
 Solely refined and solely merged with the One (*yī*),
 experience the teachings of the sages.

Recover life on the path of the great mystic true One (*zhēnyī*),
 thus you know that the One (*yī*) is the true eternal *Dào*.
 Do not think that, when the One (*yī*) is attained,
 the work is over.

Attaining the One (*déyī*) also means
 holding onto the One (*chíyī*) and not letting go.
 Penetrating the One (*yī*),
 everything merges and the inherent order is revealed. . .

Embrace the Origin (*bàoyuán*),
 guard the One (*shǒuyī*) to empty all accumulations.
 Practise assiduously and determinedly –
 without delay.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

When the practitioner overcomes duality, the paradox of being and nonbeing ceases, and there is an all-encompassing vision of Oneness. He can “face south” and yet be able “to observe the North Star”:

The return of the myriad things to the One (*yī*)
 is wondrous.

The beginning is the nonexistent One (*yī*),
 yet it creates the myriad things.
 Nonexistence and existence complement each other,
 and therefore they endure.

If you truly return from myriad existences
 to the nonexistent Oneness (*yī*),
 you will be able to face south
 to observe the North Star.

When you obtain the One (*déyī*),
 you forget the One (*wàngyī*) –
 You are both unmanifest and manifest,
 just like the Origin of creation.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

Sages and masters know that there is nothing in the entire universe greater than the *Dào*. Therefore they remain in unceasing, diligent awareness of it – never slacking in remembrance of the *Dào* and service to it. By their example of disciplining both body and mind, people learn how to return to their origin, the *Dào*. According to the *Precepts and Observances Taught by the Celestial Master* (C5th):

The wise guard the *Dào* (*shǒudào*) with an upright mind and never allow themselves to be lazy or remiss. Rather, they are diligent and solid, showing the ignorant how to control themselves (*zìjiè*) and to serve (the *Dào*) correctly. They cultivate the great *Dào* with diligence, knowing that it is utterly venerable and lofty, with none higher.

Zhèngyī fǎwén Tiānshìjiào jièkē jīng, DZ789 7b, CCED p.75

In his *Records of the Awakening to Dào*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) points to the example of determined persistence set by advanced practitioners:

Advanced people regard goodness as a goal they have yet to attain, and consider anything that is not good as being like immersion in boiling water. They stay with the *Dào* (*shǒudào*) like guarding a treasure, with determination and single-minded focus. They persevere despite setbacks, never giving up. They never change until death: they do not stop their practice until they have advanced to the profound attainment of self-realization.

Liú Yīmíng, *Wùdào lù*, ZW268, DS18

See also: **bàoyī** (8.1), **chíyī** (8.1), **meditation (Daoism)**.

1. See Livia Kohn, *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, TMLT pp.125–58.
2. *Xīshēng jīng* 25, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 5:7a; cf. *TMPS* p.250.
3. *Dàodé jīng* 21.
4. Uncertain reference. Many texts in the Daoist canon include ‘*xiānjīng*’ in their title.
5. *Dàodé jīng* 42.
6. *Jīn Dàochéng*, *Jīn zhēnrén yǔlù*, DZ1056 3a, JY227.

shughl (A), **shaghl** (P) (pl. *ashghāl*, A. *shughūl*) *Lit.* occupation, employment, pastime, hobby, activity, work, job, business; esoterically, religious, ascetic, or spiritual practice.

Shaghl is used as a term by Indian Sufis such as ‘Ināyat Khān for various meditative practices, especially those including breath control. ‘Ināyat Khān writes:

We say that the hand is in control when it can grasp something and hold it in its grasp. The fingers we say are in control when they move up and down on the piano, when they strike B when B is wanted – not striking E. Control is both in repose and in activity. Sometimes we find that we have become angry, we have become impatient, we have lost control over our mind, but before losing control of the mind we had lost our control of the breath.

Since I have been in the West, people have said to me more than a thousand times, “We cannot control our mind, we cannot keep it fixed on one point.” The first step is to lessen the activity of the mind. Then thoughts come more slowly. One should first control the breath, and make it slow and regular. By this the health of the body is improved as well as the health of the mind.

People have invented a fan to purify the air by fanning it very rapidly. By the practice of ... *shaghl*, breath also is fanned, and this rapid fanning changes it from one element into another and purifies it.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK8e pp.69–70

The intention of all such practices is the elimination of the lower self so that the higher self of the soul may be revealed:

By *shaghl* and *‘amal* and other practices, the self is made to disappear, it is lost. When the self is gone from before us then all other selves can come, then illumination comes. Then, when the individual self disappears, the spiritual self appears. Only the illusion is lost; the self is not lost, but the beginning is annihilation. This is all the secret of mysticism, all that the prophets and mystics have taught.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK8e p.206

A large number of *ashghāl* are mentioned in the literature of some North Indian Sufis. The term is often spoken of in conjunction with *dhikr* (e.g. *dhikr-u shaghl*), *dhikr* (remembrance) being the more widely known term for Sufi spiritual practices. Both *murāqabah* (contemplation, meditation) and *dhikr* are regarded as *ashghāl*.

Several interesting points arise from Sufi discussions of the various *ashghāl*. Some practices, for example, have contact with the eternal Sound (*Ṣawt-i sarmadī*) or the Unstruck Melody as their ultimate aim. This Sound is said to be the same as the absolute Essence (*Ẓāt-i muṭlaq*), devoid of all attributes, and only perfect masters know of it, for only they have shed all attributes. A living master is therefore regarded as necessary to guide the practitioner. The practice of *ashghāl*, with concentration and under the guidance of such a master, will activate spiritual life in the practitioner, which had previously been dormant. It will still his senses, purify his mind, and some

practices will enable him to hear the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī*. In some Sufi literature, the practitioner is advised not to eat flesh foods.¹

According to Sayrat Fakhr al-ʿArifīn, the *ashghāl* most worth practising are *shaghl-i fanā fī al-shaykh* (practice of extinction in the master), *fanā fī al-rasūl* (extinction in the messenger), and *fanā fī Allāh* (extinction in God), but he does not divulge the details of these practices. It is said, however, that usually only *fanā fī al-shaykh* is taught, for once that station has been attained the other two follow automatically.²

Shaghl is also used for practices employed to acquire certain occult powers, which can be used for either good or evil. Such practices are prevalent in most cultures, and commonly involve the control of other people through the development of a strong will and personal magnetism.³

See also: **dhikr**, **shughl sulṭān al-adhkār**.

1. Mawlvī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR pp.203–12.

2. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy, in *SFAH* pp.156, 162.

3. See John P. Brown, *Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, DOSB pp.336–39.

shughl sulṭān al-adhkār (A), **shaghl-i sulṭān al-aẓkār** (P) *Lit.* king (*sulṭān*) of (methods of) *adhkār*, *adhkār* being the plural of *dhikr* (remembrance); listening to the divine Sound.

According to Mawlvī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the practice is performed by closing the eyes, the lips and the ears (with the fingers), breathing in so that the attention travels from below the navel to the head, and holding it there while concentrating the gaze of the inner heart or mind on the subtle centre known as *akhfā*, between the eyebrows, also called *umm al-dimāgh* (mother of the nose, root of the nose). Here, the seeker sees the light that Moses experienced on Mount Sinai.¹ The breath is released slowly through the nose. This *shaghl* can also be performed without control of the breath.

As a result of the practice, twenty different sounds are heard inside. To describe them, says Mawlvī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, is not permitted, nor even possible; but to give an idea, it is said that the first sound resembles that of the continuous fall of a cataract. The seeker, (plugging his ears his fingers) must not allow his attention to waver even for a moment. When his attention is fixed firmly, he can loosen his fingers slightly – provided the inner sound is not obliterated by the noises of the outside world. The aim should be to perfect the attention so that the inner sound is heard even without plugging the ears, irrespective of outside noises. In fact, the inner sound should overpower all external noises. The practitioner will then experience indescribable bliss. At this stage, he begins to hear the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī* (the eternal Sound), also called *Nidā-yi Ghayb* (Sound of the Unseen), which (says the *Qurʾān*) Moses

heard on Mount Sinai.² All practitioners gradually begin to hear all twenty sounds, and the one most favoured by the practitioner becomes established within him. It is through the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī* that revelation (*waḥy*) descends on prophets and saints.³

The term is also used by Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh (eldest son of the Mughal emperor, Shāh Jahān, and brother of Aurangzeb), who had a considerable interest in Sufism and mysticism. He is believed to have attended the discourses in Delhi of the mystic Sarmad, whenever he could. Dārā is also believed to have met Guru Har Rāi (1630–1661), the seventh Sikh Guru. In his *Risālah-i Ḥaqq Numā* ('Treatise that Reveals the Truth'), he writes:

O friend, when you wish to start the practice of meditation called the king of meditation (*sulṭān al-adhkār*), to perform this noble practice, you must proceed as follows.

You must go either by day or by night to some desert place, which is free from the haunts of men, or to a cloister where no sound can reach and, sitting there, direct your attention to the ears. And in this attention, you must fix your mind for as long as you can, because in the beginning, a very subtle Sound will appear (to observe which will require your utmost attention and concentration). When you have once caught it, that Sound (*Āvāz*) will slowly become so powerful and overwhelming that it will draw your mind away from all other sides and absorb it in itself. And there will be no place or time when this Sound (*Āvāz*) will not be with you. And this Sound (*Āvāz*) that takes you away, above yourself, is merely a drop from the ocean of this Sound (*Āvāz*). Concerning this Sound (*Āvāz*), the following verse says:

Put your ear to your own heart, and speak and hear,
because the world is full, through and through,
with this incomparable
and soundless Voice (*Ṣadā-yi bī-navā*) of His.

Muḥammad Dārā Shikūh, *Risālah-i Ḥaqq Numā*,

RHND pp.12–13; cf. COT pp.17–18

See also: *Ṣawt* (3.1), *shaghl-i mayyit*.

1. *Qur'ān* 7:143; cf. *Exodus* 3:1–6, 19:1–25, 20:18, 24:15–18, 33:9–23, 34:28–35.
2. *Qur'ān* 19:52.
3. Mawlvī 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Makhzan-i Taṣavvuf*, MTAR pp.257–58.

shǔxīguān (C), **sūsokukan** (J) *Lit.* breath (*xī*) count (*shǔ*) meditation (*guān*); focusing the attention on the inhalation and exhalation in order to help bring

the mind under control and still the otherwise ceaseless flow of distracted thoughts; one of the three primary *Chán* or *Zen* meditation techniques, the other two being *kōan* contemplation (J. *kannazen*) and *shikantaza* (J. nothing but just sitting); generally used as a beginners' practice to develop initial concentration as a foundation for *shikantaza* or other techniques; not universally accepted by *Zen* teachers; a practice derived from the *Theravāda* tradition of *ānāpānasati* (Pa. mindfulness of breathing). Mindfulness of breathing, of which there are many variations, is one of the most popular forms of Buddhist meditation.

Sūsokukan involves meditation by counting inhalations and exhalations. Counting can be done in various ways, but the commonest is to count inhalations and exhalations up to ten, and then to restart:

The easiest practice for beginners is counting incoming and outgoing breaths. The value of this particular exercise lies in the fact that all reasoning is excluded and the discriminative mind put at rest. Thus the waves of thought are stilled and a gradual one-pointedness of mind achieved.

Rōshi Philip Kapleau, Three Pillars of Zen, TPZK p.32

Although there are other variations, four kinds of *sūsokukan* are traditionally described:

1. *Shutsunyusokukan*. Counting exhalations and inhalations.
2. *Shussokukan*. Counting exhalations.
3. *Nissokukan*. Counting inhalations.
4. *Zuisokukan*. Following or tracing the breath, in which the practitioner remains mindful of the breathing without counting.

The Chinese Buddhist monk Master Sheng-yen (1930–2009) describes the practice and its difficulties in some detail, from the completely distracted mind to a focused mind that is on the brink of *samādhi* (concentration, unified mind):

Before taking up the method of counting breaths (*i.e.* *shǔxīguān*), there is no consistent object on which to focus the mind. Thoughts ceaselessly turn and stir. Attention is fragmented from one instant to the next, as it darts off in countless directions, in pursuit of one object after another. We hanker after sensory data and sensations from our surroundings, reminisce over the past, and anticipate the future. . . .

When first taking up the practice of counting breaths, your attention will often wander away from breath and number; or, many associated thoughts will intrude, such as concerns over how to count the number

or how to regard the breath. You are able to sustain the count for short stretches, but usually this is interrupted before long. By repeatedly bringing your attention back to the method, the confusion of wandering thoughts gradually is brought under control, and a steady stream of focus begins to develop, enduring for longer and longer stretches of time. . . .

(With continued practice), you are able to maintain uninterrupted concentration and count each number in perfect succession for a span of at least ten minutes. Nevertheless, concentration is coarse and there still exist many subtle wandering and scattered thoughts that impinge on the margins of your attention. Although concentration may ripple and waver momentarily, these thoughts are never powerful enough to cause you completely to lose sight of the number and the method. . . .

(With further practice), you are able to maintain concentration on counting breaths without interruption, but at this point scattered thoughts are now greatly reduced. Distractions associated with the sensory environment pose almost no problem. Occasionally, wandering thoughts invented by the mind will come into consciousness and then slide away. To you, however, their presence and subsequent rippling effect remain peripheral to the main stream of mindfulness. . . .

(With yet further practice), there exists only pure counting of breaths. There are neither scattered distractions from the sensory environment nor internal fantasies of deluded thinking. Nonetheless, there is still a lucid sense of the act or process of meditation itself. There is an awareness of a self that is counting breaths, the breaths that are being counted, and the number that is counted and seized upon as the main object of concentration. Concentration itself is pure and unified, but there is still an effort and ongoing attention to the method. Though all other extraneous disturbances may have disappeared, the thread of this tripartite complex of thoughts remains and continues without interruption – inhale-exhale-count, inhale-exhale-count. Thus, the single thread of concentration, when investigated more closely, is really a complex weaving of three basic threads. . . . At this juncture, your mind is highly simplified and concentrated. In fact, you will likely be on the doorstep of *samādhi*, or ‘unified mind’.

Master Sheng-yen, Hoofprint of the Ox, HOCB pp.45–47

Master Sheng-yen continues by tracing the development of concentration into deeper and deeper levels of *samādhi*, until finally the illusion of self dissolves.

A more ancient Chinese Buddhist teacher, Zhìyǐ (538–597), generally regarded as the founder of the *Tiāntái* school, formulated a systematic exposition of Buddhist teachings. Zhìyǐ is credited with having been the first Chinese Buddhist teacher to make a significant departure from the Indian tradition, paving the way for the independent Chinese and later the Japanese traditions.

He describes the various kinds of breathing and its steady deepening with meditation practice:

When you sit down to meditate, sit easily erect, breathing through your nose. At first, your breathing may be rapid and shallow. As you relax and have the attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting whatever arises, your breathing slows down and deepens until you find that you inhale and exhale, in a cycle, once every minute. Ease may be conceived of as the standard. At no time should anything feel forced or uncomfortable; rather, it should all just happen, free of any concern on your part.

As you continue to sit, your breath grows finer and finer. You should devote, at the very least, five minutes each morning and each evening to this breathing-relaxation practice. Practice as often as you can during the rest of the day, wherever and whenever you happen to think of it. As the breath slows and becomes increasingly subtle, the mind stabilizes and grows calm. As the mind goes, so goes the breath. To illustrate this, four kinds of breath are noted as evolving in the course of practice:

The first is called windy breath to describe the sound that you make as you breathe.

The second is known as gasping breath. Here, you no longer make any sound when you breathe but have the feeling that you cannot inhale enough.

In the third type of breathing, the breath is even and silent and without any obstruction, but you have yet to feel calm. This is called air breath. These first three ways of breathing are still rough-hewn and still show signs of unrest.

When there is neither sound nor obstruction, neither roughness nor softness, and in that very quiet time when you do not feel that you are breathing at all and breathing evokes no association of any kind, you have achieved the fourth kind of breath, silent breath.

It is the breath that harmonizes. If you find that you easily grow calm and that your breath quickly becomes fine, this indicates that your mind is easily stabilized. With continued practice, it may take only a few moments for your breath to be regulated, and then the need to breathe will diminish and vanish; and, with that, you will no longer be disturbed by anything. Your mind, at this stage, is said to be quiet and stable. On the way to this trouble-free state, however, there is bound to be much discomfort and restlessness. If this persists, and to help to harmonize the breath, you can try the following methods, progressing from one to the next as you grow proficient.

Very relaxedly and unconcernedly count from one to ten in all of these exercises:

Count your breaths,
 calling one exhalation and inhalation just one breath;
 Count only your inhalations;
 Count only your exhalations.

When you have reached ten, resume counting from number one. Gradually, as your skill develops, you will be able to count to one hundred in ten groups of ten, without having your mind wander and without dropping off to sleep. However, should that happen, you are required to return to one and start all over again. As you grow more at ease, your mind and breath will, slowly and peacefully, become interdependent. Confusion and sleepiness decrease in all three breathing methods of concentration, and the mind is calmed as well.

When the goals of breath-counting have been reached, your next step will be to trace your breath. The mind, by this time, will be very calm and very concentrated. By tracing your breath, this calm and this concentration deepen until the breath is felt to enter and leave through all of your pores. As you continue in this way, you will come to experience yourself dissipating like a cloud and melting away like a fog, until there is nothing but voidness. When this happens, you find yourself freed of all sorts of illness, as the mind is established on a new, deeper level of quiet; and it is then that it is time to dispense with the method of tracing the breath.

Zhiyi, Fundamentals of Meditation Practice, FMPT pp.27–30

See also: **ānāpānasati, kōan, mòzhào Chán, shikantaza.**

siddha sampradāya (S/H) *Lit.* tradition (*sampradāya*) of the *siddhas*, the *siddhas* being perfected and liberated beings who achieved that status through the practice of particular forms of *yoga*; a yogic school that relies on awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī shakti*, as described in the *tantras* (tantric texts), under the guidance of a *guru*, a part of whose qualification is the ability to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī* in his disciples by his own inner power. The *siddhas* were often identified as *nāths*. Although there were a number of distinct lineages, the terms *siddha*, *mahāsiddha* and *nāth* have often been used more or less interchangeably.

Shakti is understood as the energy of the divine and universal consciousness; *kuṇḍalinī* is a stepped-down level of that same energy as it is manifest in the body. At initiation, *kuṇḍalinī shakti* is said to be infused into a disciple by the *guru* in an experience known as *shaktipāta*. At that time, the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened in the *mūlādhāra chakra* at the base of the spine, and rises up the spine in the *sushumṇā*, the central *nāḍī* (channel) of *prāṇa* (subtle life

energy). This awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* is experienced by disciples in a variety of ways, often involving the spontaneous adoption of external *āsanas* and *mudrās*.

The *siddha sampradāya* can be traced back at least as far as the tantric movement that flourished in India during the ninth to twelfth centuries, and is regarded by scholars as a branch of Shaivite Hinduism. The ideal of the ancient *siddhas* was the attainment of perfection and liberation through transubstantiation or etherealization of the physical body, even immortalization of the body, achieved by control of the breath and the subtle life energies (*i.e.* *prāṇāyāma*). Through this process, the *siddha* acquired the ability to manipulate the forces of nature, the paranormal powers so acquired being known as *siddhis* (perfections). Some *siddhas* are said to have lived for very long periods of time. It is from this tradition of body cultivation (*kāya-sādhana*) that the various schools of *haṭha yoga* (forceful *yoga*) are thought to have originated, traditionally associated with the *siddha* or *nāth* Gorakhnāth (C11th–12th CE).

Siddhas appear as the protagonists in a dialogue, known as *Sidh Gosht*, with Guru Nānak (1469–1539) in the *Ādi Granth*.¹ In modern times, at least two separate *guru*-lineages exist within the *siddha sampradāya*, with *āshrams* throughout India and the rest of the world. One is traceable to Swami Shankar Purushottam Tīrtha (1888–1958), who was first initiated by Swami Narayan Dev Tīrtha (*b.c.* 1879) and later by Swami Bharati Krishna Tīrtha (1884–1960). The other was started by Swami Muktananda (1908–1982), who received initiation from Swami Nityananda. Their practices include meditation, chanting, service, retreats, and so on. The meditation and chanting may be individual or in groups.

See also: **kuṇḍalinī yoga**, **Nātha yoga**, **shaktipāta** (7.4), **siddha** (7.1).

1. *Ādi Granth* 938–46.

siddhāsana (S/H) *Lit.* accomplished (*siddha*) posture (*āsana*); one of the postures of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

sīlānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of one's own virtue. See **anussati**.

silence (Gk. *sigē*, *siōpē*) Spiritually, either outer silence, as control over one's speech, or inner silence, inferring an end to the otherwise constant chatter of thoughts and the turbulence of emotions; inwardly, akin to stillness (*hēsychia*).

According to Iamblichus, the Pythagoreans placed considerable emphasis on silence (*siōpē*), requiring new members to keep a five-year external silence

and abstinence from speech, as Pythagoras himself had done. After some preliminary trials of their sincerity and determination,

he ordered those who came to him to observe a quinquennial silence (*siōpē*), in order that he might experimentally know how they were affected as to continence of speech, the subjugation of the tongue being the most difficult of all victories – as those who instituted the mysteries have taught us.

Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 17 (72:94); cf. ILP p.38

Flavius Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, says that Pythagoras learned his secret wisdom directly from *Zeus*, teaching his disciples to keep silent about all they had learnt:

For many were the divine and ineffable secrets which they had heard, but which it was difficult for any to keep who had not previously learnt that to be silent (*to siōpan*) is also a mode of speech (*logos*).

Life of Apollonius of Tyana 1:1; cf. LATP1 pp.4–5

An unattributed quotation in the *Anthologia Palatina* records that some disciples of Pythagoras practised “concentrating deeply upon silence (*sigē*) and the eternal (*aphthitōi*) internal discourse (*endothi mythōi*)”.¹ Here, the “eternal internal discourse” could refer either to the eternal communing or ‘conversation’ of the soul with its divine Source, or more specifically to the divine Speech, Word, or creative power.

See also: **hesychast** (7.1), **stillness** (8.1).

1. *Anthologia Palatina* 14:1; cf. *GAP5* pp.26–27, *SATM* p.179.

silent prayer A general term for non-vocal and sometimes non-verbal prayer. As Angelus Silesius writes:

God far exceeds all words that we can here express
in silence He is heard, in silence worshipped best.

Angelus Silesius, Cherubic Wanderer 1:240, CW p.49

The term is also used for a prayer uttered verbally in the mind, rather than externally with the tongue. This can be a spontaneous prayer (for whatever reason) or the constant repetition of a short prayer, such as the prayer of Jesus.

Silence in itself is the beginning of a remedy for the disharmonies of the world:

The present condition of the world is diseased. If I were a doctor and was asked for my advice, I should answer, “Create silence, bring men to silence – the word of God cannot be heard in the world today. And if it is blazoned forth with all the panoply of noise so that it can be heard even in the midst of all other noise, then it is no longer the word of God.” Therefore, create silence.

Søren Kierkegaard, For Self-Examination, in WSMP p.251

The ineffable silence of the Uncreated is also the origin of the divine Word:

While all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her swift course, Your almighty Word (*Logos*) leapt down from heaven out of Your royal throne.

Wisdom of Solomon 18:14–15; cf. KJV

See also: **prayer, prayer of Jesus.**

simran (Pu) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection. See **smaraṇa**.

sīvathikā-manasikāra (Pa) *Lit.* charnel-ground (*sīvathikā*) meditation (*manasikāra*); meditation at a place where bodies that have not been cremated are left to be eaten by animals and to decompose, perhaps due to lack of money to pay for the wood required for a cremation or because there are no living relatives; the last of the six practices comprising *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body); one of the six groups of meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), comprising forty subjects in all, mentioned though not systematically classified in the Pali *suttas*, but categorized in the analytical *Abhidhamma* (systematization of the *suttas*), the *sutta* commentaries and associated literature, such as Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*;¹ also discussed as *asubha kammaṭṭhāna* (repulsiveness meditation subject) or called *asubha bhāvanā* or *asubha-saññā* (meditation on repulsiveness). The Pali *suttas* recommend nine states of decay and disintegration as subjects for charnel-ground meditation, hence the term *nava-sīvathikā-manasikāra* (nine charnel-ground meditations).²

Charnel-ground (S. *shmāshāna*, T. *dur khrod*) meditation also figures prominently in tantric practice, both Hindu and Buddhist, especially esoteric Tibetan Buddhism and the tantric traditions of Kashmir Shaivism and the *kaula* tradition.

See also: **asubha bhāvanā**.

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 6, *PTSV* pp.178–96.
2. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 13 (*Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.58–59, 88–89, *PTSM3* pp.91–92.

six dharma of Nāropa, six doctrines of Nāropa. See **Nā ro chos drug**.

siyah (He) *Lit.* think, converse, commune, meditate, reflect, ruminate; meditation, prayer; speech, chatter, complaint; a term used for both verbal prayer and meditation.

The twentieth-century scholar Aryeh Kaplan (1934–1983), as well as earlier kabbalists and *ḥasidim*, have interpreted a number of biblical passages that use *siyah* (and other terms from the same root, such as *siḥah*) as references to meditation, although many translations render it as ‘prayer’, ‘complaint’, or ‘speech’.¹ Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1167), in his biblical commentaries, interprets *siyah* as “conversation with one’s own heart”.² Although used in a general sense, there are a number of instances where the meaning is either ambiguous or clearly refers to meditation. In the *Psalms*, for example, the psalmist writes:

I meditate (*siyah*) upon Your statutes.

Psalms 119:15; cf. in MBAK p.102

On the words of Your wonders I meditate (*siḥah*).

Psalms 145:5; cf. in MBAK p.102

Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation (*siḥah*).

Psalms 64:1

I remember my melody (*neḡinah*) in the night,

I meditate (*siḥah*) with my heart,

and my spirit (*ruah*) searches.

Psalms 77:7; cf. KB

In the same vein, psalm 102 is described as:

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overcome,

and pours out his meditation (*siyah*) before the Lord.

Psalms 102:1

Other biblical instances include:

Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, . . . and Isaac went out to meditate (*suah*) in the field toward evening.

Genesis 24:62, in MBAK p.101

Commenting on this verse, the *Talmud* says, “The *siḥah* is nothing but prayer.”³ Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim (1809–1879) explains in his commentary on this passage that “Isaac went there each afternoon to meditate (*hitboded*),” explaining that the *siḥah* was Isaac’s meditation.⁴

Siḥah, however, can mean both external conversation as well as meditation. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (1924–2014) maintains that it is important to meditate and pray aloud – to initiate a conversation (*siḥah*) with God and to immerse oneself in it.

1. See Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, MBAK pp.100–10.
2. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Psalms 119:15 and 145:5*, in MBAK p.102.
3. *Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Berakhot 26b, in MBAK p.101.
4. Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim, *Commentary on Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Berakhot 26b, in MBAK p.102.

sleep in meditation, sleep in prayer The problem posed by sleep at the time of interior prayer and meditation. Since both sleep and interior prayer are accompanied by relaxation and closing of the eyes, it is very easy for a practitioner to sink from spiritual practice into sleep. Various factors make the tendency more likely, including overeating, insufficient sleep, and finding the practice tedious.

Effective meditation calms and relaxes the mind so much that sleep may result. Sleep normally intervenes when a person is already tired; or when bored or uninterested in something, sleep will intervene as a natural escape mechanism. According to Indian conceptions, sleep comes about when the attention falls below the eye centre to the throat, heart, or navel centres. So for someone who is concentrating at the centre behind the eyes, as soon as the attention begins to collect there and the thoughts begin to quieten down, there is a natural tendency to fall asleep. For one whose meditation practice is to concentrate below this centre or at no particular centre at all, there is an even greater desire and tendency to fall sleep.

Too much food, heavy food, or anything that draws the attention down into the body will also be conducive to sleep, and a practitioner needs to be on guard against all of these. Insufficient sleep will have the same effect. Mystics therefore recommend that the early part of the night should be utilized in sleep because the body is naturally tired after a day’s activity. The latter half

of the night is then free for meditation, when the body and mind are rested and the vibrations of the world are comparatively still.

Posture, too, influences the tendency to sleep, as well as the place chosen for meditation. The temptation to lie down and go back to sleep is naturally greater when sitting on one's bed, for instance, than if one gets up, walks about and becomes fully awake, and then sits down in a chair or on the floor. Sitting upright in a cross-legged position or on an upright chair is also less conducive to sleep than lying down or lazing in a comfortable armchair.

Ultimately, the positive solution to the problem of sleep is the awakening of a true and great longing to attain the culmination of one's meditation, whatever that may be. If the mind and soul can leave the body, then the relaxation of meditation is far more refreshing than sleep. Though the body may enter a state akin to that of sleep, the mind and soul remain awake and superconscious within, concentrated at the eye centre or traversing the inner realms.

Mystics have commonly spoken about these problems in discussions with their disciples and in their writings, since sleep is a hurdle that almost every practitioner has to overcome. Maharaj Sawan Singh writes to a disciple:

The posture is not easy for you, and the usual course with you is to sit upright in a chair. You occasionally lose consciousness and muscular control momentarily, and the head falls backward or sideways until it ends with a jerk which awakens you.

In the ordinary way, when one is about to sleep, what happens is that as attention withdraws from the eye focus, one loses muscular control, becomes unconscious of the body, and finally the eye centre gets vacant, and consciousness gives place to semi-consciousness and then to unconsciousness.

The loss of consciousness means that the attention did not stick to the eye focus, but fell below this focus, onto the lower centres – the throat or the navel. At the throat centre, it is almost in a semiconscious state, causing dream; and at the navel centre, there is complete loss of consciousness. If it were held to the eye focus and, instead of falling down, it had gone up to that centre, there ought to have been full consciousness and superconsciousness, not of the body or the external world, but of what you were doing within – repetition or grasping the (Sound) Current, or seeing something within, if anything was visible.

Therefore, loss of consciousness means ordinary sleep. There cannot be unconsciousness if the attention is at the eye focus, or at the centres above the eyes. When you say the jerk awakens you, it means that you were asleep. There is nothing unusual in this. Attention, by habit goes down, and we wish to come up. It is here that the struggle

commences. So, when you get the jerk, start again. Consciously stick to the focus. When you are conscious of the focus, and repeatedly bring your attention to it when it goes off, you will, by and by, become unconscious of the surroundings and the body, and remain conscious of the focus or what lies in the focus.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 147, SG pp.224–25

In another letter, he similarly explains:

We have taken as the objective, the eye focus. In a way, we experience this daily. We come to this focus every time we pass from the wakeful to the sleep state, and return. When we are going to sleep, our attention is drawn toward the eyes, and then the whole body goes senseless. We do not (our attention does not) stay at the eyes, but rapidly the attention passes down to the heart or the navel centre and becomes dull there, and we become completely unconscious.

When engaged in talk and you become overpowered by sleep, you may have said to your friends, “My eyes are getting heavy. I have sleep in my eyes.” You may watch your attention going first to the eyes, when you pass from the conscious to the sleep condition. You may study the behaviour of a child when he is about to go to sleep, or return from the sleep state. A student reading his book, when overpowered by sleep, struggles to keep his attention in the eyes.

Now, if you wish to go inside and prove this truth, fix your attention inside of the focus, hold it there by force of determined will. Let the body become senseless, but hold your consciousness at the focus, becoming unconscious of the lower world, but fully conscious of all that is going on at the focus. Then enter the astral world and pass on to still higher regions, enjoying a condition of superconsciousness and great delight.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 157, SG p.257

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, a disciple of and successor to Maharaj Sawan Singh, writes about turning sleepiness to advantage:

A practitioner (*sādhak*) should take advantage of the time when sleep overtakes him. At that time, the tendency of the mind and senses is naturally towards the eye centre. So, welcome this sleepy feeling, but do not fall asleep. At the time of meditation you may feel sleepy, but should avoid sleep. Keep awake and fully conscious. Take advantage of this natural tendency of the mind and senses at this time and sit in your eye focus. This state of ‘waking sleep’ is a blissful state. Practise it for some days and you will find how it helps towards your inner

ascent. But care should be taken that you neither fall asleep nor fully wake up. In this state the mind often becomes one with the universal mind, and sees many visions and sights.

Do not sleep during or immediately after *bhajan*.

*Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul,
A Spiritual Bouquet II, SOSJ pp.186–87*

Taking as an image a rural market in India, Mīrābāī (C16th) writes amusingly of the devotee's struggles with sleep. Resorting to the tricks of a sly trader, she intends to get rid of sleep at any price:

I will sell you, O sleep (*nīndaḍī*), if a buyer I find:
sleep (*nīndaḍī*), my enemy, I will surely sell you.
I will put you on sale for one paisa per *sar*,¹
and for five *sars* I will take just two paisa.
Even for one maund, I'll take only one rupee.

Loudly I'll shout repeatedly, begging the buyers to come.
If a customer approaches with little money in his purse,
I'll even dispose of you on credit,
for payment at some distant date.
I will sell you, my foe, below the market rate.

In the heart of the market, will I set high my stall.
I will tip the balance
to give more of you against a lesser weight.
If I can manage on the sly,
more weight will I add to my side of the scale,
and effect a rapid sale.

Sleeping on and on, I have wasted my days.
For aeons I have slept and lost all my fortune.
Sleep (*nidrā*), you stubborn foe,
pray go, make that home your home
where there are no devotees of my Lord.
My beloved came home,
but he left, for I, miserable one, remained lost in sleep.

Mīrā now keeps only her dear Lord,
forever softly entrapped within her eyes.
Depart, my enemy:
there is no longer any room for you.

Mīrābāī, Harjas 99, MJAK p.103; cf. MDLS pp.170–72

The difficulty is a human one, spanning the centuries and millennia, and prevalent in all religious and spiritual traditions. Hence, in the early Christian *Doctrine of Addai*, Addai counsels against falling prey to such tiredness:

Do not let weariness in prayer at the stated times draw near to you.
Take heed to the truth, which you hold, and to the teaching of the truth,
which you have received, and to the inheritance of salvation, which
I commend to you.

Doctrine of Addai the Apostle, DAA p.40

The gnostic writer of the *Teachings of Silvanus*, in a tractate containing much practical advice concerning meditation, speaks of knocking at the inner door, adding:

Permit no sleep to your eyes, nor drowsiness to your eyelids.

Teachings of Silvanus 113; cf. TS pp.70–71

John Klimakos observes:

Excessive sleep is a bad companion, stealing half a lifetime or more from the lazy man. The inexperienced monk is wide awake when talking to his friends, but half asleep at prayer time. The lazy monk is a great talker whose eyes begin to shut when the sacred reading is started.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 20, LDAC p.197

Bar Hebraeus offers some suggestions on staying awake: “Helpful towards vigils are spare food and small labour, and a short sleep at noon.”² To which Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov adds, “Let us sleep sufficiently, but not excessively.”³

See also: **avasthā** (8.1), **dawn**, **nidrā** (8.1), **night**, **time for prayer**.

1. A *sar* is nearly two pounds; a *maund* is forty *sars*.
2. Bar Hebraeus, *Book of the Dove* 2:5, BDH p.26.
3. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On the Prayer of Jesus* 17, OPJ p.131.

smaraṇ(a) (S/H), **sumiran** (H), **simran** (Pu) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection, memory; mentioning, thinking about something, recalling something to mind; repetition, recitation; from the Sanskrit root *smṛi* (to remember); spiritually, remembrance of God or a deity; meditation on the Divine; counting a rosary.

Japa, the most common term for the recitation of prayers and *mantras*, has long been used in a wide spectrum of practices – mystical as well as external, religious, and ritualistic. *Smarāṇa*, *sumiran* and *simran*, when used in a mystical context, tend to be more specific to the inner remembrance of God. Hence, for example, the use of *smarāṇa* in a *mantra* associated with the ancient sage Dattātreya (regarded as an incarnation of *Vishṇu*) begins: “*Auṃ namo Bhagavate Dattātreyāya, smarāṇa-mātra-saṃtushṭāya!*” – “*Auṃ*, salutations to Lord Dattātreya, who is well pleased by his remembrance (*smarāṇa*)!”.¹

Smarāṇa is one of the nine principles of a devotional life listed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (c.C9th–10th): *shravaṇa* (hearing about God); *kīrtana* (singing and chanting God’s praise); *smarāṇa* (remembrance of God); *pādasevana* (serving the feet, performing all actions as a service to God); *arcana* (worship of God, especially through images); *vandana* (adoration of God in all beings); *dāsyā* (cultivating the attitude of servanthood); *sakhya* (intimate companionship with God); and *ātmanivedana* (self-surrender to God).²

Using verb forms of the term, the *Bhagavad Gītā* says:

Even at the time of death,
 whoever departs remembering (*smaran*) Me alone,
 on being released from the body, will reach My Essence.
 There is no doubt about this.

At the time of death,
 whatever state (of being) a person remembers (*smaran*),
 having been constantly absorbed in that thought (throughout life) –
 He will go to that alone.

Bhagavad Gītā 8:5–6; cf. BGT

On the other hand, someone who behaves in a pious manner but still harbours desires for sensual things is a hypocrite:

He who restrains his organs of action,
 but continues in his mind to brood over (*smaran*) the sense objects –
 He is deluded and is called a hypocrite.

Bhagavad Gītā 3:6; cf. BGT

Though the term has been used for remembrance or memory in a general sense since ancient times, it seems to have been texts concerning *bhakti* (devotion), especially those written by Indian *sants* (saints) and devotees, that have brought the word more fully into the lexicon of Indian mysticism. Indian *sants* and devotees have imbued *sumiran* or *simran* with two quite specific meanings.

In their vocabulary, remembrance of God can refer either to repetition of a *mantra*, which may be a verbal name for God, or to conscious inner contact with the divine and mystic Name of God – meaning His creative power or Word, which brings about a natural state of remembrance of God. Both of these practices can be called remembrance of the Name of God, and in some instances *sumiran* or *simran* may refer to both.

Every religion has spiritual practices centred on the repetition of prayers or other verbal formulae. Most of these practices are not *sumiran* in the way the *sants* understand it. Regarding *sumiran* performed with the aid of a rosary, for instance, Kabīr says:

The rosary (*mālā*) rotates in the hand
and the tongue moves in the mouth;
The mind wanders in all the ten directions –
this is not *sumiran*.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Sumiran kā ang 25, KSS p.89, PMSI p.54

Sants have advised *sumiran*, as a *mantra* to be mentally repeated, because the human mind is in the habit of continuously thinking about something, usually concerning the world and material existence. It is by creating deep impressions on the mind that thoughts concerning the world draw the soul back to the world in life after life.

The soul goes where the tendencies and attractions of the mind lead it. The *sumiran* given by a master at the time of initiation is associated with him and links the disciple to the *Shabd*, the Word of God. It is a means of invoking the atmosphere or presence of the Divine. The specific purpose of such *sumiran* is to withdraw the currents of the mind and soul from all parts of the body, the senses and the world, and to fix them at the eye centre. Then, by means of *dhyāna* (contemplation) on the form of the master, the attention is enabled to remain there in a concentrated state until it hears and is attracted to the melody of the *Shabd* within.

Sumiran and *dhyāna* unify and concentrate the attention so that it becomes sufficiently one-pointed to reach the spiritual form of the master on the threshold of the astral realms. *Sumiran* is also used by disciples while in the inner regions as a test and safeguard against negative and distracting powers. Also, whenever the mind is free during the course of daily life, it can be held on a rein by keeping it occupied with *sumiran*. This keeps the mind concentrated in the memory of the Divine, preventing it from unnecessarily running out into the world, and is a significant help in promoting an atmosphere and mood for meditation.

Although simple to describe, perfect *sumiran* is very difficult to perform, because the mind has been habitually wandering outward into the creation for millions of lifetimes. Its success is thus entirely dependent upon the effort of the disciple and the grace of a perfect master.

Successful *sumiran* at the eye centre brings with it the benefits of various other forms of meditation that are performed with the attention held below the eye centre. This includes the spiritual aspects and benefits of *yoga*, self-discipline, good moral conduct, *prāṇāyāma*, temperance, concentration and contemplation on lower centres. Concentrated *sumiran* focuses the mind to such an extent that it acquires *riddhis* and *siddhis* (miraculous powers) and other psychic perceptions, though practitioners are cautioned not to perform miracles.

The *sumiran*, as taught by the *sants*, is an entirely inward, mental technique. It is so simple that anyone can practise it – old or young, sick or well, learned or illiterate. *Sants* therefore greatly praise its value, and encourage their disciples to make use of it at all times. The line of twentieth-century *sants* following Swami Shiv Dayal Singh of Agra have used the Punjabi term *simran* almost exclusively for the repetition of names at the eye centre, and have explained the process in considerable detail.

The basis of the practice is described in the introduction to a book of letters written by Maharaj Sawan Singh (1858–1948) to American disciples:³

The whole world is engaged in remembering or thinking about something: the shopkeeper about his shop, the farmer about his land or crops, a person in service about his work, a mother about her child, a friend about his companion, and an enemy about his foe. This is called the *simran* of worldly objects. It is through this process that worldly objects enter into every pore of our body, mind and intellect, and man is virtually dyed in the hue of the world.

We are by nature accustomed to repetition; and one kind of repetition can be replaced by another. The *simran* of the objects of the world must be replaced by the *simran* of God. . . .

The repetition of any name or names of God is called *simran*. Through its correct practice one is in a position to see the inner light. If a person were to remember God constantly, he would enter into a superconscious state – but that state can be achieved only with the grace and blessing of the Lord. One who gains that state, even for a moment, gets life everlasting. The remembrance of God is so amazingly intoxicating that those who attain it do not wish to be separated from the Lord even for a moment. . . .

One should do *simran* with the mind, with one-pointed attention. That is extremely efficacious. When the mind is engaged and absorbed in *simran*, it does not roam about. . . . In the early stages, considerable effort is needed to carry on *simran*, but as the practice ripens, *simran* goes on automatically. This practice is both natural and easy.

Dawn of Light, Introduction, DOL pp.53–55

As a result of concentrated *simran* at the eye centre, the attention withdraws from the body, and the practitioner becomes so inwardly focused that the body is forgotten:

So long as mind does not sit in the focus and does not make it its headquarters, but continues running away from the focus, it has not benefited by the *simran* practice. As a matter of fact, it is not doing the *simran* practice. It is doing something else, away from the focus, secreting all sorts of thoughts connected with worldly affairs, country affairs, professional affairs, household affairs, and other affairs. If the mind were busy in (1) repeating the names; and (2) repeating them at the focus, it would be said to be doing *simran*. But if tongue repeats names and mind is busy elsewhere, thinking of something else, then it is not *simran*. Repeating of names in the focus is *simran*, and remembering of something else elsewhere is *simran* of that something.

Simran of worldly things to which man is accustomed is to be changed into *simran* of the names in the focus. This must narrow down the mind and this is what is called concentration. And there is no reason, if the mind sticks to the focus and is engaged therein in *simran* or hearing the current, that the extremities of the body – the hands, feet, arms, legs – and finally the trunk of the body should not go numb.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 117, SG pp.171–72

By *simran* alone the soul leaves the body and goes up. When concentration is complete, one does not feel the need to change positions or to attend to the calls of nature for hours (eight or ten). . . . When the *simran* is complete, one hears the Sound within. If you can vacate (withdraw consciousness from) even half the body, you will see light inside. I have received hundreds of letters to this effect.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 9, SG p.15

This process of withdrawal happens automatically when the mind is inwardly engaged in *simran*:

Do not try to lift your consciousness from the lower body to the eye centre. Just keep your full attention at the eye centre, and with the attention go on repeating the names with a motionless mind. As this concentration at the eye centre develops, the consciousness will on its own automatically start withdrawing from the lower body to the eye focus. You are not to make an attempt to do so as that would pull back your attention from the eye centre to the lower part of the body. You should be conscious only of the *simran* at the eye centre and not of your body while you are doing *simran*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light 334, QFL p.170

Effort we have to put forth to concentrate, to do *simran*. Doing *simran* is an effort you are putting forth, for when we do *simran*, we have to forget the whole world. We are concerned only with the darkness in our forehead. We close our eyes and we see nothing but darkness, and when you close your eyes, you are there where you should be. Keeping your mind in that darkness, do *simran*.

Don't try to find any particular point in that darkness such as two or three inches up in the darkness, two or three inches down. Then you are lost in that. You are always conscious of finding a point, and you don't concentrate. Just forget your eyes, even forget your body. Close your eyes – you are automatically there where you should be – and then do *simran*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, *Die to Live 101*, DTL p.117

In addition to *simran* at the time of meditation, the practice of *simran* during the day, whenever the mind is free, keeps it in remembrance of the Divine and is of great help in meditation:⁴

Simran provides spiritual food for the soul. Just as you take food daily to maintain your body, similarly, whether you are at home or travelling, you must provide food for the soul. Never be remiss in this respect. Repetition of God's name is an unfailing remedy for all ills. We should never let our mind wander freely. With whatever free time we have at our disposal, we should engage ourselves in *simran*. Many people perform their worldly tasks with their hands and feet. Their minds remain free. They should employ their hands and feet in work, and put their mind in the remembrance of the Lord. If one is to succeed in this practice, one must carry on *simran* at all times whether awake or asleep, just as the hands of a clock move ceaselessly.

Dawn of Light, Introduction, DOL pp.55–56

In reply to a question, Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990) describes how constant *simran* whenever the mind is free prevents it from worrying about the past and the future:

Our mind is never still and is always thinking about something. It is always thinking about worldly faces, worldly objects, and it is never still. So, if we want to forget those things, we have to direct the mind into a different channel. In order to do that, we should repeat the name of the Lord while moving about or doing our work. There are two things that we are usually thinking about. Mostly we are unhappy thinking about what has been our past. We generally think about that and have a sense of guilt about it, and then we are sorry for what we have done and are always worrying and repenting, or feeling sorry for

ourselves and trying to justify our actions. Secondly, we are always bothered about our future and that is always making us frustrated and unhappy. If you will keep your mind constantly in *simran*, you will not have this sense of guilt or frustration or unhappiness; and, when you sit for your meditation period, because you have not allowed your thoughts to be scattered out into the world, you will easily be able to withdraw your attention back up to the eye centre and will be in touch with the Sound.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Master Answers 99, MA pp.137–38

This *simran* should be almost constant, even automatic, and the more devotedly it is carried out, the easier it becomes for us to contact the realities of the spirit. Fixing the mind at the third eye is to mount the lowest rung of the ladder of salvation. Thence it will rise up and up by means of *Shabd*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Discourses 2, LOSM pp.18–19

Keeping the mind in *simran* at all times induces an awareness of the illusory nature not only of the outer world but also of one's sense of individuality:

The stage will come when it (*simran*) will go on automatically. Even if you are talking to people you will feel that you're doing *simran*; and we should get into that habit, because only then are we able to concentrate at the eye centre. Only that will help us to become unconscious of the world, of what is going on around us. Then we will just move as actors move on a stage.

In this state we will feel that there is no reality. Sometimes you will be talking to a person and you will feel that you are not you, someone else is walking and talking with the other person. *Simran* helps to separate your individuality from yourself. Then the whole day you will see the world as a stage, as if somebody else is acting, talking, doing a husband's duty, a wife's duty, a child's duty, and you are someone different from yourself. And that helps. That is the effect of *simran*, and that is ultimately what we want to achieve. We want to separate our real self from this world.

Sometimes you may feel that somebody else is sitting in meditation and you are watching somebody sitting in meditation, you are separate from the person who is meditating. That feeling does come.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 177, DTL pp.161–62

Always keep your mind in *simran*. Does it cost anything? Just go on repeating the holy names as the small boys repeat, "one, two, three, four". *Simran* is a great force. By *simran* alone you develop strong

willpower. *Simran* should be done patiently and vigorously, without a break. It should be incessant, unceasing, continuous, and constant.

*Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul,
A Spiritual Bouquet 15, SOSJ p.188*

Spiritual *simran* should be a constant process. Even while talking, it should go on mentally, and the five beads of the holy names should continually roll on their axis. In fact, whenever the mind is empty of necessary thoughts, it cannot be better employed than in *simran*. All of us can do *simran* while travelling in trains, automobiles or aeroplanes. The shopkeeper can do *simran* while awaiting customers, peasants while ploughing land, sisters and mothers while attending to domestic chores. Actually, *simran* should become our second nature.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Spiritual Discourses, SD1 p.140

Only at the time of meditation should you attend to *simran* with concentration. When you are doing mental work, then you can't do *simran*; but if you are doing work with your hands or just walking, then of course your mind is free and you can attend to *simran*. When your mind is occupied, how can you do *simran* – unless you have reached the stage where it goes on automatically in your subconscious mind?

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 74, DTL p.97

Though simple enough to describe, the practice itself can be a struggle because the mind is in the habit of continually running out. Maharaj Charan Singh discusses these difficulties with a disciple, and explains the purpose of *simran* within context of the meditation system taught by the *sants*:

- Q.** Master, when one is doing *simran* very poorly, what can one do? When one finds it very difficult to do *simran*, what can one do about it?
- A.** Brother, one should do *simran*! You can collect the wandering mind, which has become so wild, only by *simran*. *Simran*, though dry, is an essential part of meditation. It's only with the help of *simran* that we are able to concentrate at the eye centre, and then we can be in touch with that Sound within which pulls us upward. *Simran* is an essential part of meditation, very essential.
- Q.** But Maharaj Ji, what if you can't hold onto the *simran*? What if you start the *simran* and it just goes away from you, it just disappears, and about an hour later you realize you should have been doing *simran*?
- A.** Then after an hour, again start. When you realize that you have forgotten the *simran*, that you are doing something else, again start.

This is the habit of the mind: when you are doing *simran*, it will run away, it will start thinking about worldly things. Bring it back again and again. That is knocking. Slowly and slowly you're able to get into that *simran* and into that concentration.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 161, DTL pp.151–52

Although *simran* is a means to an end, it brings happiness to the mind, which is itself a priceless treasure:

Simran looks dry, but the concentration that you get with *simran* alone gives you peace and bliss and happiness. The more your mind is concentrated, the more happy you are; the more your mind is scattered, the more frustrated you are. As long as the mind is below the eye centre towards the senses, you can never be happy – there's nothing but frustration and agony. But when you're able to withdraw your consciousness to the eye centre and still your mind, you feel bliss and contentment and happiness. And *simran* is the only way that you can withdraw your consciousness to the eye centre.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 176, DTL pp.160–61

Despite its benefits, *simran* is only a means to an end. The purpose of *simran* is to bring the mind into contact with the divine Word or Sound:

Simran is a dry and insipid process, but a very, very essential process. We can hear the Sound without first doing *simran*, and we will be happy to hear that Sound, but at that stage the Sound will not pull us. Unless we are able to withdraw our attention up to this point, the Sound will not take us up. We will hear it; we will enjoy it; but we will remain where we are. . . .

Simran is the means to contact *Shabd*, and to go up with its help is the end. So *simran* is a very important means of withdrawing to this point, the eye centre, and to be in touch with the Sound. Therefore, we should try to give more time to *simran* in the beginning, and less time to the Sound. But when the Sound is clearly audible and strong, it is pulling us up, we are enjoying it, then we should switch from *simran* to hearing the Sound and just submit ourselves to the Sound. Ultimately the Sound, and not the *simran*, is to pull us up. *Simran* ceases to exist when we cross the first stage.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Master Answers 99, MA pp.137–39

Since the purpose of *simran* is to still the mind so that it can hear the *Shabd*, a period of *simran* is always to be followed by a period of mental stillness in which the practitioner listens to – or for – the Sound:

Q. Master, in addition to giving the larger part of our meditation time to *simran*, did I understand correctly it must always be done first, before *bhajan* (lit. devotion; here, listening to the Sound), or could one listen to the Sound Current first if it happened to be very loud at the beginning?

A. Sister, the procedure, especially for the beginners, is to devote at least three-fourths of the time to *simran* and *dhyān*, then one-fourth of the time to hearing the Sound. But if one is successful in concentration, one is successful in withdrawing his consciousness up to the eye centre, and without any effort he is behind the eyes, and hears the Sound then he can give less time to *simran* and more time to *Shabd*. When the *Shabd* is pulling, the *Shabd* is attracting or the *Shabd* is strongly audible within, then you can switch from *simran* to the *Shabd*. There is no hard and fast rule that while at the time of *simran*, we must avoid *Shabd*. No, if, at the time of doing *simran*, the *Shabd* is very strong, pulling and catching, we are not to resist it; rather, we have to submit to that Sound.

The object of *simran* is just concentration, to be in touch with the *Shabd*. *Simran* and *dhyān* are just a means to an end. We have to attach ourselves to that Sound. So, if one is lucky to hear it and it is pulling, he should not ignore it, nor should one insist on doing *simran* at that time. He can switch onto the Sound. Ultimately, the stage comes when you cease to do *simran*. You listen only to *Shabd* and you merge into *Shabd*, and *Shabd* takes you back. Then you do not need *simran* at all, for the moment you close your eyes you are in *Shabd*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, The Master Answers 105, MA pp.142–44

The mind is like a monkey and does not wish to be confined and be still. It is its nature to be flitting from place to place and thought to thought, seeking – as it were – the bliss which it once enjoyed in the region of *trikuṭī* (universal mind). When it is able to catch the *Shabd*, the divine Word, it will be still. It has been going out for ages and naturally finds it difficult to go in. *Simran* is an invocation, an appeal and a gradual turning inside. Persevere on, then the periods when you, the real you, are in control will increase.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Letter 218, LOSM p.253

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh (1884–1951) also says that results can only be expected after many years of practice:

When the concentration is complete, the Sound will come of itself. The function of the Sound is to pull the soul up. The Sound cannot

pull it up unless the attention has been withdrawn from the entire body by means of repetition, just as a magnet cannot attract a piece of iron which is lying beyond its magnetic field. It is the function of *simran* to bring about the stillness and concentration of mind. Repetition should be performed while the attention is fixed at the eye centre. In other words, when performing *simran*, please try to peep into the darkness which is visible to the closed eyes, but without any strain on the eyes. To begin with listening to the Sound, at the sacrifice of *simran*, is putting the cart before the horse....

This method is natural, though very slow. It requires years of practice to make the mind motionless, accustomed, as it has been for ages, to wander at will. *Simran* will act as a bridle in the mouth of an unbroken colt. Therefore, the time spent on repetition should never be considered wasted.

Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, Science of the Soul, Letters 52, SOSJ pp.148–49

If light appears within, the mind should be focused upon that:

The bright light that you see in the middle of the forehead is a happy sign of progress. Fix your attention in this bright spot during *simran*. Try to keep your mind in *simran* at all times during the day when it is free.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Divine Light, Letter 49, DL p.178

Simran is to be performed mentally and not associated with either the breathing or the tongue:

To do *simran* in rhythm with the breath is a wrong habit and, like all habits that need to be changed, it will gradually be overcome. You should not bother about it, but do your *simran* in the right way, as you have been instructed. If by chance the attention sometimes drops down or turns to breathing, just ignore it and resume the correct practice.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Letter 35, LOSM p.128

The throat centre has nothing to do with the *simran*. You are to do *simran* mentally, not with the tongue. Try to keep your attention at the eye centre while doing *simran*. It is the attention that has to do the *simran*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 147, DTL p.143

Nor should there be any attempt to visualize the words:

Q. Is it wrong to see the words when you're trying to do *simran*? If we can't contemplate on the master, is it okay to see the words inside?

A. See those words in which language? After all, if you're going to

see them, you must also think about some language in which the five words are written. Which language would you like to see?

You shouldn't worry about the words or the language in which they are written. Then your mind is slipping out. Don't worry about the words or the language or anything, for it won't help. You have to be mentally at the eye centre, mentally concentrated in *simran*, not visualizing the words or the forms of the words or the meaning of the words. These things don't help.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 145, DTL p.142

Simran is the way to restrain the mind and to resist temptation:

Q. If we're faced with temptations and we say *simran*, how does that help?

A. Well, sister, what is *simran*? *Simran* is a means to concentration at the eye centre, and we are tempted by the senses only when our mind is scattered. When the mind comes from the eye centre downward to the senses, only then are we tempted by these senses. When it is not scattered, when it is collected at the eye centre, automatically you will save yourself from all those temptations. In that way *simran* helps. It keeps you concentrated at the eye centre; it keeps your thoughts at the eye centre.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 70, DTL p.96

The words comprising the *simran* will vary, but the practice is the same:

Q. Do all the perfect masters teach the same *simran* to their disciples?

A. They teach the course of *simran*. The words may be different according to the language or to whatever they think best. The words can be different, but they will tell you of the same process for concentration.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 143, DTL p.141

In fact, within other systems there are other methods of reaching the eye centre, but beyond that the path that leads to the highest is contact with the *Shabd*:

There may be many schools of thought for concentrating at the eye centre, but from the eye centre upward there is only one path: *Shabd*, Sound Current, Spirit. For withdrawing the consciousness to the eye centre, some people may have used different methods, but above the eye centre there are no two ways. There's only one way, that of the Holy Ghost or Spirit.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 143, DTL p.141

These twentieth-century *sants* have used *simran* specifically for mental repetition. Earlier *sants*, such as Kabīr (c. 1398–1518), on the other hand have used *simran* for both mental repetition as well as the higher remembrance of God through contact with the mystic Name or Word (*Shabd*). Sometimes, the meaning can be presumed to include both. The former leads on to the latter, and both practices result in an increasing and abiding awareness of the divine presence, which is what is meant by remembrance of God:

Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 the door of liberation (*mukat duār*) is found:
 You shall go to heaven,
 and not return to this earth.
 In the home of the fearless Lord,
 the celestial trumpets resound:
 The unstruck (*anhad*) Sound Current
 will vibrate and resonate forever.
 Practise such meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 in your mind.
 Without this meditative remembrance (*simran*),
 liberation (*mukat*) will never be found.

Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 you will meet with no obstruction.
 You will be liberated,
 and the great load will be taken away.
 Bow in humility within your heart,
 and you will not have to be reincarnated
 over and over again.

Remember Him in meditation (*simran*),
 celebrate and be happy.
 God has placed His lamp (*dīpak*) deep within you,
 which burns without any oil.
 That lamp makes the world immortal:
 it conquers and drives out the poisons
 of sexual desire and anger.

Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 you shall obtain salvation.
 Wear that meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 as your necklace.
 Practise that meditative remembrance (*simran*),
 and never let it go.
 By *guru*'s grace, you shall cross over.

Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 you shall not be obligated to others.
 You shall sleep in your mansion,
 in blankets of silk.
 Your soul shall blossom forth in happiness
 on this comfortable bed.
 So drink in this meditative remembrance (*simran*),
 night and day.

Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 your troubles will depart.
 Meditate (*simar*), meditate in remembrance (*simar*) on the Lord,
 and sing His praises in your mind.

This meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 is obtained from the true *guru*.
 For ever and ever, remember (*simar*) Him, day and night,
 while standing up and sitting down,
 with every breath and morsel of food.

The Lord's meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 is obtained by good destiny.
 Remembering Him in meditation (*simran*),
 you shall not be loaded down.
 Make this meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 of the Lord's Name your support.
 Says Kabīr, He has no limits:
 no *tantras* or *mantras* can be used against Him.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 971, AGK

In another poem, Kabīr provides examples of how focused the mind should be in remembrance (*simran*) of God:

Keep your mind in *sumiran* as the water girl
 keeps her attention in the pitchers;
 She walks, she talks, but her attention,
 O Kabīr, stays in the pitchers on her head.

Keep your mind in *sumiran* as the cow's thoughts
 are fixed on her calf;
 All day she grazes out in the meadows,
 but never forgets the calf in the cowshed
 who awaits her return. . . .

Keep your mind in *sumiran* as the lustful
lives in thoughts of lust;
Not for a moment does he forget –
Night and day, all through the eight watches,
on the object of his lust he dwells. . . .

Keep your mind in *sumiran* as the miser
broods over his wealth;
Every moment his thoughts hover over his hoard. . . .

Live always in *sumiran* as the fish in water –
a moment's separation and it gives up its life, O Kabīr.

Put all your heart in your *sumiran*,
utter not a word with your mouth.
Close your outer doors,
and open the door within yourself.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Sumiran kā ang 7–8, 6, 9, 13–14, KSS p.88;

cf. KWGN pp.609–10, in SBE p.121

In fact, *sumiran* is a constant theme throughout Kabīr's poetry:

The Lord's Name is His own essence,
it is the *tilak* (mark on the forehead),
the diadem of the three worlds.
When Kabīr the slave put it on his forehead,
he acquired boundless beauty and grace. . . .

Kabīr, *sumiran* is the essence of all paths:
all else is nothing but a fruitless task;
I have surveyed the origin and the end of all other practices,
and found them all within the bounds of *Kāl* ('Time', 'Death').

Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Sumiran kā ang 3, 5, KG p.4; cf. KWGN p.611

Kabīr also observes that meditation costs nothing and is the surest path to happiness. Here, *tap* (fire, heat; hence, fervour, intensity; austerities) refers either to meditation itself or to the level of dedication required to practise it successfully:

O brother, repeat with all your heart
the Name given by the *satguru* (*satguru Nām*).
Jap (repetition) and *tap* (fiery determination) cost nothing:
there is no out-of-pocket expense.

To regard wealth and children as the means to happiness
is the mistake you are making.

Practise remembrance (*sumiran*) of the name of *Rām* (*Rām Nām*).

Kabīr, Shabdāvālī 1, Chetāvanī aur updeśh 81:1–2,

KSSI p.51; cf. in SSII pp.152–53

Other *sants* have used the term in a similar manner. As with Kabīr, while *sumiran* always refers to remembrance of God, the meaning is sometimes repetition of a verbal name, sometimes contact with the mystic Name, sometimes both.

In his *Rām Charit Mānas*, Tulsīdās (c. 1532–1623) uses *sumiran* to mean repetition of a name of God, in this case, *Rām*. “Shiva started repetition (*sumiran*) of the name of *Rām*,” he writes at one point in the narrative.⁵ At another place he relates, “Vibhīshaṇa woke up, and began repetition (*sumiran*) of *Rām*, *Rām*,” and Hanumān (devotee and friend of *Rām*) “was delighted at heart to find a virtuous soul.”⁶ In another instance, however, it seems more likely that he is referring to the mystic Name, the creative power:

When I behold any creature dying in the holy Kāshī, it is by the power of His Name that I rid it of all sorrow (liberate it)... If men repeat His Name, even in a helpless state, then the sins committed by them in many previous existences are burnt away; while those who practise remembrance (*sumiran*) of Him are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence as if it were a mere impression made (in the ground) by the hoof of a cow. *Rām* is none other than that supreme Spirit.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:118.1–3; cf. RCML pp.125–26

Many other mystics have mentioned the benefits of the remembrance of God:

Remembering (*simran*) God,
one does not have to enter into the womb again.

Remembering (*simran*) God,
the pain of death is dispelled,...
one remains awake and aware, night and day,...
one is not touched by fear,
one does not suffer sorrow (*dukh*).

The meditative remembrance (*simran*) of God
is in the company of the holy (*sādh kai sang*)....

In the remembrance (*simran*) of God
are knowledge, meditation (*dhiān*),
and the essence of wisdom (*budh*)....

In the remembrance (*simran*) of God,
duality (*dūjā*) is removed,...

one becomes good, ...
 one flowers in fruition.
 They alone remember Him in meditation (*simrahi*),
 whom He inspires to meditate (*simrā'e*).
 Nānak grasps the feet of those humble beings.

The remembrance (*simran*) of God
 is the highest and most exalted of all.
 In the remembrance (*simran*) of God,
 many are saved, ...
 all things are known, ...
 there is no fear of death, ...
 the filth of the mind is removed,
 (and) the ambrosial (*amrit*) *Nām* is absorbed into the heart. ...

Those who remember (*simrahi*) God
 dwell in peace (*sukh*).
 Those who remember (*simrahi*) God
 are immortal and eternal.
 They alone hold to the remembrance (*simran*) of Him
 unto whom He Himself shows His mercy.
 Nānak begs for the dust of their feet.

Those who remember (*simrahi*) God
 generously help others, ...
 their faces are beautiful, ...
 have a pure and spotless lifestyle, ...
 experience all sorts of joys. ...
 O Nanak, this meditative remembrance (*simran*)
 comes only by perfect destiny. ...

Remembering (*simran*) God, the Unstruck (*Anhad*) vibrates.
 The peace (*sukh*) of the meditative remembrance (*simran*) of God
 has no end or limitation.
 They alone remember (*simrahi*) Him
 upon whom God bestows His grace. ...

Remember (*simar*), remember in meditation (*simar*) the Lord,
 the Creator, the Cause of causes. ...
 For the remembrance (*simran*) of the Lord,
 He created the whole creation. ...
 O Nānak, the *gurmukh* attains the remembrance (*simran*) of the Lord.

The saints also say that knowing how to perform this practice is a gift that arises from keeping the company of saints:

Let people try to restrain me,
O friend, I will not be stopped.
I will remain in the saints' company
and gain the bliss of the Lord's love.

I will not be bothered with the world.
If all my wealth goes, let it go;
Even if my head be severed, I will not complain.

My mind is absorbed in *sumiran*:
I meet all censure with cheer.
O Lord of Mīrā, O Everlasting One,
grant me the shelter of my master's feet.
Mīrābāī, Sudhā Sindhu, Nischay ke pad 36, MSS p.391; cf. MDLS p.74

Here I am, a sinner among men:
O *Hari*, destroyer of sorrow, I know not the practice
by which I can cross over to the other world.
I surrender at your lotus feet:
be kind and bestow on me remembrance (*smaraṇ*) of Yourself alone.
Purandaradāsa, Parāku mādade 1, in SSI1 pp.204–5

The gift of *simran* comes with the gift of initiation into the divine Word or Name:

The *guru* has made my life fruitful:
my pain is forgotten, and I have found peace deep within myself.
The *guru* has blessed me with the ointment of spiritual wisdom:
without the Lord's Name, life is mindless.
Meditating in remembrance (*simran*),
Nāmdev has come to know the Lord:
His soul is blended with the Lord, the life of the world.
Nāmdev, Ādi Granth 857–58, AGK

All a disciple has to do is to take advantage of the gift:

You have received the eternal Name –
focus your attention, catch hold of the Name.
The master wants to pull your attention inward,
so prepare yourself to go with him on the inner journey. . . .

Firmly attach your consciousness to the Name
 and put an end to the cycle of birth and death.
 Hold the master's key in your hand –
 turn the rosary of your mind with *sumiran*.
 Tune in to the unstruck music of *Shabd*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:28.2–3, 6–8, SBP p.169, SBPS p.243

See also: **japa, mantra**.

1. *Dattātreyā Upanishad* 2, *VUAR* pp.163–64.
2. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7:5.23–24.
3. Drawn from Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters, PMSI* pp.47, 50, 48, 70, 69, 48, 55, 66.
4. Drawn from Maharaj Sawan Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters, PMSI* pp.61–62.
5. Tulsīdās, *Rām Charit Mānas* 1:59.2; cf. *RCML* p.70.
6. Tulsīdās, *Rām Charit Mānas* 5:5.1–2; cf. *RCML* p.752.

smṛityupasthāna (S) *Lit.* attendance (*upaṭṭhāna*) to mindfulness (*smṛiti*); establishment of mindfulness. See **satipaṭṭhāna**.

sngon 'gro (T) *Lit.* going ('gro) beforehand (*sngon*); rendered phonetically as *ngondro*; preliminary, preparatory or introductory practices in Tibetan Buddhism, performed prior to engaging in more advanced spiritual exercises on the path to enlightenment.

Sngon 'gro practices generally include recitations of the *mantra* of taking refuge in the Buddha, the *sangha*, and the *Dharma* (refuge recitations); prostrations; cultivation of *bodhichitta* (wisdom-mind, a mind intent on enlightenment); repetition of the one-hundred syllable *Vajrasattva mantra*; *maṇḍala* offerings; and *guru yoga*. All these are intended to purify the mind, remove obstacles in the form of negative emotions and attitudes, and render the mind more pliable in preparation for the fully fledged and more complex tantric practices and rituals that follow, which are designed to lead to enlightenment. The purpose is also understood in terms of accumulating sufficient merit (*puṇya*) so that the student may pass on to more advanced tantric practices. Preliminary practices are the strong foundation on which the primary esoteric tantric practices are built; they purify the mind and create the motivation necessary to do the more rigorous tantric practices of *anuttara-yoga tantra*, *mahāmudrā*, and *dzogchen*. *Guru yoga* is described differently by the various schools and lineages. Although it is often included as one of the preliminary exercises, other descriptions portray it as a more

extensive practice that includes both preliminary practices as well as more advanced visualization and meditation.

Various Tibetan texts exist concerning preliminary practices, one of the best known being *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung* ('Words of My Perfect Teacher'), by the nineteenth-century *lama* Patrul Rinpoche. This explains the preparatory exercises of *Klong chen snying thig* ('Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse'), a *Nyingma* system of Tibetan Buddhism.

Preliminary practices are generally the same, with some variations from one school to another, and even from one *guru* to another within the same school. A *guru* may also tailor the practices to the particular abilities and nature of the student. Typically, the exercises consist of two parts – the common or ordinary, and the uncommon or extraordinary. The common exercises are intended to withdraw the mind from the manifold distractions of material existence, and include meditation on: impermanence (*anitya*); on the transience, significance and rarity of human birth as the only physical form in which there is an opportunity to progress on the spiritual path; on the suffering arising from living in *saṃsāra* (material realm of transmigration); on the workings of the karmic process with its consequences, and the significance of performing wholesome and avoiding unwholesome actions; and the need for a suitably qualified spiritual teacher or *guru*.

The uncommon or extraordinary preliminary practices include more elaborate spiritual exercises of an essentially tantric nature, performed under the guidance of a qualified *guru*. They are more inward in nature, and include: refuge recitations; engendering *bodhichitta*, which is the desire to attain enlightenment (*bodhi*) for the benefit of all sentient beings, usually by multiple repetition of a prayer; recitation of *mantras* such as the hundred-syllable *Vajrasattva mantra*; *maṇḍala* offerings and *pūjās*; and *guru yoga*, which entails devotion to and meditation on the *guru*. Each of these recitations are to be repeated one hundred thousand times or more, together with prostrations and relevant visualizations, according to the instructions of the *guru*. Given the arduous nature of these recitations and the time required to accomplish them, disciples would often undertake a retreat in order to spend all their time in the practice. Even then, the disciple may pass several years with his *guru* before he is deemed fit to begin the more advanced practices.

In a book on the *mahāmudrā* teachings of Tibetan tantric Buddhism, the fourteenth *Dalai Lama* (Tenzin Gyatso, b.1935) and Alexander Berzin emphasize the significance of the preliminary practices.

The *mahāmudrā* teachings also emphasize the importance and need for extensive preliminary practice. The point of such practice – for example making hundreds of thousands of prostrations – is to purify ourselves of the grossest levels of obstacles and build up positive force so that our *mahāmudrā* meditation will be more effective for bringing

us to enlightenment. In this context, obstacles do not refer to economic, social or other external hindrances, but to difficulties within ourselves. Positive force, usually translated as ‘positive potential’ or ‘merit,’ refers to the conducive internal state that results from constructive or ‘virtuous’ actions of body, speech, mind, and heart.

To appreciate how this process of purification works so that we can undertake it in the most effective manner, it is essential to understand what are internal obstacles. . . . We cannot possibly eliminate the mental and emotional obstacles to our spiritual success unless we know what they are.

*Tenzin Gyatso and Alexander Berzin,
Gelug-Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra, GKTm p.13*

The authors go on to point out that the obstacles referred to include emotions and mental states such as pride, confusion, and tension; and the purpose of the many prostrations, for instance, is to reduce pride. Tension, they observe, can result from becoming bogged down in a task at hand because of a dislike for it or a feeling of possessing inadequate skill or knowledge to accomplish it successfully. As a result, the mind starts complaining about the task, begins to seek distractions, becomes increasingly tense, and ends up taking an inordinate amount of time to complete it. The authors give the example of completing a tax return. The concentration generated by the multiple recitations of the preliminary practices helps to clear emotion and confusion from the mind, and to instigate a direct approach to simply doing the task at hand and then forgetting about it, without all the mental and emotional clutter:

Thus preliminary practices are an essential prerequisite for achieving any success with the *mahāmudrā* methods. Without them, we may sit and do what seems to be *mahāmudrā* meditation. It is not difficult to imagine we are focusing on the natural state of the mind. But, in fact, all we are doing is sitting there, either daydreaming or, at best, focusing on nothing, completely ‘spaced out’ with our head in the clouds. We may become a bit more relaxed in the process, but our meditation basically goes nowhere profound.

*Tenzin Gyatso and Alexander Berzin,
Gelug-Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra, GKTm p.22*

See also: **guru yoga**.

sod ha-yiḥud (He) *Lit.* mystery (*sod*) of unification (*ha-yiḥud*); a kabbalistic term used in the *Zohar*,¹ where it refers to preservation of the harmonious

relationship among the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) in the realm of emanation (*‘olam ha-aẓilut*, the highest spiritual realm), and returning the *sefirot* to their source in the *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite, the Godhead) – *i.e.* the reuniting of the emanations with the Creator in the realm of emanation. This amounts to *tikkun* (restoration) of the original divine harmony that was broken at the time of creation. The means by which this unification and harmony is to be brought about is that of prayer and devotion.

Sod ha-yihud is also the name of a book of esoteric practices by Rabbi Judah ben Samuel, the first of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century German pietists (*Hasidei Ashkenaz*), and the name of an eighteenth-century prayer book compiled and edited by Rabbi Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto.

The practice of *sod ha-yihud* draws on a mystical interpretation of the biblical commandment embodied in the *Shema* prayer:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord (*Yahweh*) is our God, the Lord is One.
And you shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your might (*ma’oz*).

Deuteronomy 6:4–5, KB

The kabbalists proposed a way to ‘unify’ the name of God, with the power of heart, soul and might, as implied in this biblical passage; thereby, “man becomes an active participant in the renewal of the unity of divine forces.”² They maintained that each of the words of the biblical passage corresponds to one of the *sefirot*, as well as to the limbs of the human body. The intention of their religious exertions was unification of the *Shekhinah* (the ‘feminine’, immanent divine power) with *Yahweh* (the Lord), the divine creative ‘masculine’ power. This would achieve ‘unification’ of the immanent power with the transcendent – the lower six (or seven) *sefirot* with the higher three. It was not uncommon for the kabbalists to use the joining of man and woman, husband and wife, as a metaphor for the joining of *Yahweh* with the *Shekhinah*.

Isaiah Tishby, a translator and interpreter of the *Zohar*, explains:

This inner process in the life of the Godhead goes by the name of *sod ha-yihud* (the mystery of unification), and it constitutes the principle aim and object of the mystical worship of God. Through devotion in prayer and the fulfilment of the commandments, man becomes an active participant in the renewal of the unity of divine forces. The ‘mystery of unification’ has two components: the preservation of harmonious unity within the structure of the world of the *sefirot*, and the unification of the Emanator with the world of emanation through the return of the *sefirot* to their source.

Isaiah Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, WZ1 p.240

Tishby explains elsewhere:

When thought ascends or when the two wills (human and divine) are joined, the gulf between man and God is abolished. But in the mystery of unification the divisions and the differentiated aspects within the Godhead itself are removed. The *sefirot* become inextricably linked to one another; they are all comprised together, and they ascend in this unified state to *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite).

Isaiah Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, WZ3 pp.948–49

A passage from the *Zohar*, using obscure and convoluted symbolism, describes seventy lights corresponding to and illuminating the seven *sefirot*, which are the branches of the Tree of Life. The powers of the *Shekhinah* are symbolized as the perfumes and spices exuded by the Tree. The *Shekhinah* itself is symbolized as the central *sefirah* of *Tiferet* (Beauty), and is understood to be the essence of the Garden of Eden, whose spiritual perfumes and light prepare the soul of the devotee to be joined with her. The soul is also symbolized as the people of Israel – the Jewish people:

When Israel engages in the mystical unification (*yihud*) of the *Shema* (prayer), with a perfect will, a light emerges from the secret of the supernal world (*i.e.* the upper *sefirot*), and this light strikes the spark of blackness (*i.e.* the inapprehensible *Ayn-Sof*) from within and splits up into seventy lights; and these seventy shine on the seventy branches of the Tree of Life. This tree then exhales perfumes and spices (out of sheer delight) and all the trees in the Garden of Eden exhale perfumes and praise their Master, for then the consort is adorned for entry into the canopy with her husband.

All the supernal limbs are united together in a single desire and with a single will to be one, without any separation. Then her husband conceives the intention of bringing her to the canopy to be one with her, to unite with (his) consort. Therefore, we arouse her and say “*Shema Yisrael* (Hear, Israel): ‘Prepare yourself. Your husband comes to you in all his finery, and is ready to meet you.’”³

“The Lord, our God, the Lord is one,” in a single unification (*yihud*), with a single will, without any separation; for all the limbs become one and enter into a single desire. (*Tiferet*, the summation of all the limbs, is called *YHWH* (Lord), and has the single purpose of uniting with his consort, the *Shekhinah*.) When (the people of) Israel say, “The Lord is one” and arouse the six extremities, these six extremities immediately become one and enter into a single desire. (The first six words of the *Shema* prayer: *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheni Adonai*

eḥad – “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One” – symbolize the unity of the *sefirot* from *Hesed* to *Yesod*.)

Zohar 2:133b, *WZ3* p.1023

Just as they engaged in unification (*yiḥud*) – the mystery of the upper world in one, and the mystery of the lower world in one – so we too must unify the upper world in one and the lower world in the mystery of one: one with six extremities and the other with six extremities. That is why there are six words here for the mystery of the six extremities, and six words there for the mystery of the six extremities. “The Lord shall be one, and His name one.” Blessed is the inheritance and the portion of the man who sets his desire upon this, both in this world and the next.

Zohar 2:134b, *WZ3* pp.1028–29

According to the kabbalists’ understanding, through their devotions and observance of the biblical commandments the *sefirot* are reunited with each other, stage by stage, until they return to their source in *Ayn-Sof*. In this way, the gulf between the concealed Godhead and His revealed creation is bridged.

See also: **sefirot** (4.1), **tikkun** (8.1), **yiḥudim**.

1. *Zohar* 2:133b–34b, *WZ3* pp.1023–29; see also *Zohar* 2:216a–b, *WZ1* pp.252–53 (n.26).
2. Isaiah Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, *WZ1* p.240.
3. *Deuteronomy* 6:4.

solitary life The life of a hermit, solitary or religious recluse, who passes much of the time in meditation, interior prayer and contemplation, often practising various physical austerities at the same time; eremitism; seclusion, solitude; a way of life greatly favoured in Christianity by the early desert fathers, who withdrew to the desert to do battle with the demons who were believed to stir up the passions in the lower part of the soul; a tradition handed down to later generations of monks.

Among the desert fathers, solitude did not always entail complete isolation. Monks generally formed themselves into communities, where individuals could withdraw to their cells, either within the monastery or outside, for several days or weeks at a time. Some lived in solitude during the week, venturing out from their cells only on Sundays, to receive holy communion. Some lived mostly in seclusion, visiting the monasteries for only short periods. Some were itinerant, going from monastery to monastery. Only a few removed

themselves entirely from human contact. Early authorities on the subject, such as Evagrius, advised that monks should only live in solitude to the degree that they were able to endure the severity of the inner struggle. If it proved too much, they were to return to a monastic community: “If a brother does not profit by solitude, let him revert to the discipline of the community.”¹ As the monastic movement developed, obedience to the rule of the order and to the spiritual director became established customs, and periods of solitude were only undertaken under the direction of a suitable guide.

During seclusion, the solitary needed to keep himself occupied with prayer, reading holy and spiritual books and meditation on passages from the scriptures, consideration of his own imperfections or past sins, and so on. Austerities added into the regimen intended to subjugate the body included fasting, vigils, and sometimes more extreme forms of bodily mortification. The intention was to remain occupied with the remembrance of God at all times, and to know the joy and ecstasy of communion with Him.

The two greatest problems facing many of those who adopted the life of a hermit were: firstly, discouragement in the shape of dejection, apathy and spiritual aridity; and secondly, the human weaknesses of anger, avarice, self-esteem and desire of any kind, especially sexual desire. Both discouragement and the human passions were to be overcome by prayer, reading, meditation, austerities, and generally keeping the mind occupied with spiritual matters. Human passions, especially sexual desire, must have tormented many, even those who did not live in solitude, leading St Paul to observe, “It is better to marry than to burn.”² Likewise, a fourth-century Persian Christian, Aphrahat, advises:

If any man who is a monk or a saint, who loves the solitary life yet desires that a woman, bound by monastic vow like himself, should dwell with him, it would be better for him in that case to take a woman openly as a wife, and not be made wanton by lust.

Aphrahat the Persian Sage, Demonstrations 6:4; cf. HEDA p.366

No one would put themselves through such hardship without the hope of significant recompense. The spiritual reward for those who endured was certainly painted in glorious terms:

Do not be in fear, O solitary who loves solitude and who fights to the death in the struggle of righteousness against sin for the sake of the love of your Lord! The time of your struggle will not last long, because, after a certain period of years, of however long it may be, and after your good will and your true love to your Lord have been tested in the trial of your struggles and fights against His enemies, not only will He extend, as always, His help for your victory whenever the demons

fight against you, but when the period of your fight comes to an end, He will completely drive the demons from you and extinguish their urges from your heart. Instead of the numerous evil thoughts that they were bestirring in you at the time of your fight, He will fill your soul with numerous spiritual visions, so that your mind will fully rejoice in divine thoughts.

Isaiah the Solitary, in On Solitude; cf. WS7 pp.103–4

Solitude is not the preserve of a select few. Many experience the need for peace and quiet, once in a while, and for various reasons. Some may seek the stillness of the Divine within themselves; others may simply need to regroup, and know themselves in the absence of external pressures and input. On the other hand, in solitude it can be difficult to maintain enthusiasm for the spiritual life; and meeting others of a spiritual bent of mind can provide the support, inspiration, and input needed to continue.

Even among seekers of the Divine, a solitary life may be of benefit to some, but not to others. A person may be deeply spiritual and in contact with the Divine while in the midst of a busy life; the mind of a hermit may range throughout the whole world while he sits in a secluded hut or cave. Withdrawal from an active outer life does not eliminate the basic needs of the body, nor its desires. Some say that the absence of distractions is conducive to interior prayer. Others maintain that a life in society brings more joy and opportunity for service than one of solitary prayer. There is a natural tendency to hold that one's own particular way of life is the best, forgetting, perhaps, that not everyone is built the same way. The English hermit, Richard Rolle, who experienced great spiritual highs in his inner life, extols the virtues of the solitary over communal life:

There have been people, and there probably still are, who have without hesitation put communal life above the solitary. They urge us to hurry towards life in a community if we want to attain the heights of perfection. There is not much to say by way of argument against such folk, since the only life they approve of is the one they want to practise, or at least know something about. In other words, they do not approve of the solitary life because they know nothing about it. It is a life which no one who 'lives in the flesh' can know, unless it has been given him by God. No one can assess it rightly who is uncertain about it and the way it works. I have no doubt that if they knew more about it, they would praise this life rather than the other.

But a worse mistake is made by those who keep on denigrating and abusing the solitary life. They say, "Woe to him who is alone!" But they do not understand 'alone' to mean 'without God', but 'without company'. A man is truly alone if God is not with him. . . .

Indeed, he who chooses the solitary life for God's sake, and lives it properly, is closer to marvellous virtue than to "woe"; and remembrance of the name of Jesus will continually delight his mind. The less men fear to embrace for God a life with no human comfort, the more will the gladness of divine consolation be given them. Indeed, they will be the recipients of frequent spiritual visitations, which they would certainly not have known in a community.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 13; cf. FLML (1:13) pp.59–60, FLRR pp.82–83

Conversely, the more sociable and well-known Sufi, al-Ghazālī, who kept a large and hospitable household, maintains that courtesy and understanding of others is more readily learnt in communal life. Unsociability may stem from a sense of superiority to others, and solitude may induce spiritual pride. In a chapter of his *Iḥyāʾ Ulūm al-Dīn*, devoted to the advantages and disadvantages of the solitary life, he relates:

One can earn the qualities of courtesy and humility in society, which cannot be acquired in solitude, which sometimes creates pride. It is reported that an Israelite wrote nearly three hundred and sixty books on wisdom, and thought that he had acquired some standing with God for this. God then revealed to the prophet of that age: "Tell the man: you have filled the world with hypocrisy. I will have none of it." Then he gave up writing books, and took refuge in an underground cave, thinking, "Now I have gained the good pleasure of God." God then revealed to His prophet: "Tell him: you cannot gain My pleasure until you mix in society, and endure their troubles and afflictions." Afterwards, he mixed in society. Then God revealed to His prophet: "Tell him: now you have gained My pleasure."

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ Ulūm al-Dīn 2:7; cf. IMRR2 pp.184–85

François de Sales, speaking more to householders than to monks, counsels a balance between the two:

To go to extremes in seeking and in shunning company are equally blameworthy for those who live in the world. The former is a sign of idleness and laziness, the latter indicates disdain or contempt for those about us. You should love your neighbour as yourself; to show that you love him you must not avoid his company, and to show also that you love yourself you must be content with your own company when alone. "Think first of yourself," says St Bernard, "then of others." If there is no good reason for seeking the company of others or for entertaining them at home, keep yourself company; but if others come to you,...

or if there is good reason to seek them, mix with them willingly and cheerfully, in God's name.

François de Sales, Devout Life 3:24, IDL p.154

Generally, Christian mysticism, especially until more recent times, has favoured solitude as a help in contacting the Divine. Thus Thomas à Kempis writes in the name of Christ:

My son, My grace is precious and may not be mingled with worldly concerns and pleasures. Therefore, if you wish to receive it, you must remove every obstacle to grace. Seek out a place apart, and love the solitary life. Do not engage in conversation with men, but instead pour forth devout prayer to God that you may preserve a humble mind and a clean conscience. Count the whole world as nothing, and place attendance on God before all outward things. For you cannot attend on Me, and at the same time take pleasure in worldly things. Remain detached from acquaintances and friends, and independent of this world's consolations.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 53, ICTK p.167

Similarly, Peter of Damaskos observes:

Nothing so abets our secret destruction as conceit and self-satisfaction, or so cuts us off from God and provokes our chastisement at the hands of other men as grumbling, or so disposes us to sin as a disorderly life and talkativeness. Again, nothing so quickly fosters the acquisition of virtue as the solitary life and meditation, or so rapidly promotes gratitude and thankfulness as reflection on God's gifts and our own wickedness.

Peter of Damaskos, Virtues and Passions, Philokalia, PCT3 p.162

The highest solitude, however, is inner solitude, when the soul remains still, and alone with God:

It is called inward solitude, because within the heart is the spirit alone, recollected with its God, and forgetting all things in the world – yes, forgetting even itself.

Luis de la Puente, Spiritual Guide, OLP4 p.226ff.; cf. in SSM2 p.252

As François de Sales advises such solitude is available even when in company:

Remember to retire often . . . into the solitude of your heart, while you are outwardly engaged in work or with others. This spiritual solitude

can be preserved no matter how many people there are about you, for they are only about your body and not about your heart, which can remain all alone with God. . . . In any case, our work is rarely so serious that we cannot now and then stand aside from it and enter this place of divine solitude.

When St Catherine of Siena's parents deprived her of the time and place for prayer and meditation, our Lord inspired her to make her soul a shrine to which she could retire with him in spirit in the midst of her exterior occupations. Worldly criticism caused her no inconvenience for the same reason; she merely shut herself in this interior shrine, she said, and found consolation with her heavenly Spouse. After this she always advised her followers to make a shrine of their own hearts in which to dwell. Often withdraw, then, in spirit into this shrine, where, alone, you may speak heart to heart with God.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:12, IDL p.66

Walter Hilton says much the same, adding that this inner feeling induces a love of external solitude. He is talking of "a man who by grace comes to be exalted" in God:

The soul is then alone, for it is entirely estranged from the society of those who love the world, although it still remains among them bodily. . . . It is so deeply conscious of the intimate and blessed presence of God, and so delights in Him, that for His love it can easily forego all love of worldly creatures. . . . The prophet speaks of this spiritual solitude, saying: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart."³ That is, the grace of God leads a soul from the distasteful company of carnal desires into solitude of mind, causes it to forget the pleasures of the world, and by its sweet influence breathes words of love into its heart.

A soul is truly solitary when it loves God and devotes itself wholly to Him, and has lost all taste for the consolations of the world. And the better to maintain this solitude, it retires from the company of men, if it can, and seeks physical solitude, since this greatly promotes solitude of soul and the free working of divine love. And the less interference it suffers from empty chatter without or unprofitable thoughts within, the freer it is to contemplate God. In this way it attains solitude of heart.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:40, LPH pp.226–27

As the Sufi, Sa'dī, summarizes, even in company, his heart is with the beloved:

Have you never heard of being
both present and absent at the same time?

I am in the company of others,
while my heart is elsewhere.
Sa'dī, Ṭayyibāt 29:2; cf. TOS p.42

See also: **hermit** (7.1), **monk** (7.1), **solitary** (7.1).

1. Evagrios, in *On Solitude*, WS7 p.82.
2. *1 Corinthians* 7:9, *KJV*.
3. *Hosea* 2:14.

solitude See **solitary life**.

spirit lodge A Native American rite, peculiar to the northern Algonquin and neighbouring tribes from the plains; a form of séance in which the shaman attempts to communicate with the spirit world. The Swedish anthropologist Åke Hultkrantz (1920–2006) explains:

A good example of a trance with strong inner tensions is offered in the shamanic rite denoted as the ‘shaking tent’, ‘conjuring lodge’, or ‘spirit lodge’. This rite is performed among the northern Algonquin and certain neighbouring plateau and prairie-plains tribes. It takes place at night in a darkened lodge. The shaman, bound fast hand and foot, calls on the spirits and falls into a trance. Soon the tent begins to shake, sparks are visible in the smoke hole, and strange animal sounds echo from various parts of the tent. When the worst of the storm has subsided there begins something like a spiritualist séance: the representatives present from the spirit world inform the medicine man through a control about various things on which he has sought knowledge, and they assist him with the curing of sick persons who are present. The spirit lodge of today is experiencing a remarkable renaissance; the author has himself attended a séance where the majority of those present were youths.

Åke Hultkrantz, Religions of American Indians, RAIH p.100

See also: **yuwipi**.

spiritual exercise, spiritual practice Generic terms for various internal practices of mental concentration, devotion, and spiritual worship; mystic or interior prayer; contemplation, meditation.

Spiritual practices are concerned with development of the inner state of the human mind and soul. Since all human beings, from this perspective, are

constituted in the same way, it is no surprise to find that practices intended to develop inner spiritual life have existed at all times and in all religions and cultures. They are a natural, if not essential, aspect of human existence, and may or may not be associated with particular religious beliefs or a particular philosophical outlook.

If human beings are understood as spiritual beings who have forgotten their spiritual essence, then the primary result of spiritual practice can be generally understood as bringing about a greater awareness of the spirit within. Nevertheless, spiritual practices are performed for a variety of purposes. The goals of the various practices can include the cultivation of focus and concentration in all aspects of life; the attainment of inner peace; the expansion of consciousness into spiritual realms or dimensions; the development of miraculous powers; the withdrawal of the mind and soul from the body, and development of the ability to go through the experience of death before actually dying; the development of human virtues, and love and devotion for God; self-realization; God-realization, and so on.

Probably the earliest mention of spiritual exercises in Western culture is in ancient Greek philosophy, in which spiritual practice was a fundamental aspect, in stark contrast to its modern academic namesake. Indeed, viewing ancient philosophy as a way of life that includes a number of spiritual exercises is a more authentic way of looking at the manner in which it was practised and lived. From this perspective, the dialogues of Plato, probably the best-known proponent of Greek philosophy, can themselves be understood as spiritual exercises designed to guide the participants and the reader towards a certain mental attitude, turning the attention from the external to the internal. That ancient philosophy was a matter of practice is evident from observations such as:

As they say in the mysteries, “the *thyrsus*-bearers are many, but the mystics (*bacchants*) are few,” meaning, as I understand it, ‘the true philosophers’.

Plato, Phaedo 69c–d, DPI pp.420–21

Initiation into the mysteries entails spiritual exercises; Plato is implying that only a few initiates could be regarded as mystics, and it is they who are the “true philosophers”. Here, a *thyrsus* is a staff, and an emblem of an initiate into the mysteries. Plato also defines philosophy as the practice and preparation for death: “True philosophers are in training for death, and to them of all men, death is least alarming.”¹ This training consists of

separation of the soul from the body, . . . and accustoming itself to gather itself together from every part of the body, and to concentrate itself until it is completely one-pointed. And to be, both now and in the future, a soul released from the chains of the body.

Plato, Phaedo 67c–d; cf. CDP p.50, DPI p.418

“Accustoming” presupposes the regular practice of this exercise.

Plato also prescribes spiritual exercises before going to sleep, to turn the mind from baser to higher things, and thus avoid unwanted and disturbing dreams. Here, he understands human nature according to the classical tripartite division of ‘appetitive’, ‘passionate’, and ‘rational’. The “rational part” is fed on thoughts concerning higher things, and is collected by spiritual exercises into a “pure awareness of self”:

When a man’s condition is healthy and sober, and he goes to sleep after awakening his rational part (*logistikon*) and nurturing it on noble thoughts and words, collecting himself in pure awareness of self (*synnoia*, *i.e.* meditation); when he has neither denied nor indulged his appetitive part (*epithymētikon*) too little or too much, but just enough to lull it to sleep, and prevent it and its pleasures and pains from disturbing his higher part – which is thereby left in solitude and purity, free to contemplate and aspire to knowledge of the unknown, whether past, present, or future; and when he has in like manner tamed his passionate part (*thymos*), and does not go to sleep after a quarrel, with the anger still awake within him – if he has thus quieted these two parts (appetitive and passionate) of his soul, and awakened the third, in which reason (*phronēin*) resides, and so goes to his rest, you are aware that, under such circumstances he is most likely to apprehend Truth, and the visions of his dreams are less likely to be lawless.

Plato, Republic 9:571d–572b; cf. CDP pp.798–99, DP2 p.442, RBS2 pp.336–39

Creating positive and uplifting attitudes (*L. habitus*) and habits of thought was also among the goals of the spiritual exercises practised by the Stoics. The philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922–2010) writes of their practice of paying attention to the present moment:

Attention to the present moment was, in a sense, the key to spiritual exercises. It frees us from the passions which are always caused by the past or the future – two areas which do not depend on us. By encouraging concentration on the minuscule present moment, which in its exiguity is always bearable and controllable, attention increases our vigilance. Finally, attention to the present moment allows us to accede to cosmic consciousness, by making us attentive to the infinite value of each instant, and causing us to accept each moment of existence from the viewpoint of the universal law of the cosmos.

Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, PWLS pp.84–85

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE), Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, also describes the practice of concentration upon the present moment:

Everywhere and at all times, it is up to you to accept piously whatever is happening at the present moment, to behave fairly towards those who are present with you here and now, and to apply discrimination to your present thoughts, so that nothing shall steal into them without being well examined.

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 7:54, in PWLS p.84; cf. MMAA pp.55–56

Discriminating between that which depends on us and that which does not was among the spiritual exercises prescribed by the Stoic teacher Epictetus (55–135 CE). In order to help his young students attain mental detachment, he asked them to practise distinguishing between what really belonged to them and what did not:

Go out at first light, examine whatever you see or hear, and answer as if you had been asked a question. . . . Is this subject to your will or not? No – discard it; throw it away. . . . It means nothing to you.

Epictetus, Discourses 3:3; cf. DEGL p.206

Engraving concise formulae and injunctions in memory, so that they readily came to mind in moments of crisis or to check fear, anger or worry, were among the Stoics' techniques for inculcating positive habits of thought. Self-examination both in the morning and the evening was also recommended:

First thing in the morning, we should go over in advance what we have to do during the course of the day, and decide on the principles which will guide and inspire our actions. As Marcus Aurelius puts it: "At the break of dawn, say to yourself: 'I'm going to come across a busybody, an ingrate, a thug, a cheat, a jealous man, and an antisocial man. All these defects have afflicted them because of their ignorance of what is truly good and evil.'"² In the evening, we should examine ourselves again, so as to be aware of the faults we have committed or the progress we have made. We should also examine our dreams.

Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, PWLS p.85

Another Stoic exercise for attaining mental detachment was consideration of death. The Roman statesman and Stoic philosopher Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE) counsels a disciple:

Think on death, or rather, if you prefer the phrase, on migration to heaven. . . . It is a wonderful thing to learn thoroughly how to die. . . . He who has learned to die has unlearned slavery; he is above any external power, or at any rate, he is beyond it.

Seneca, Epistles 26:8–9; cf. SEP1 pp.190–91

In another of his letters, Seneca discusses the importance of spiritual exercises, together with the need for a guide to help one keep on track:

It is therefore indispensable that we be admonished, that we have some advocate of upright mind and, amid all the uproar and jangle of falsehood, hear that one voice only. But what voice shall this be? Surely a voice which, amid all the tumult of self-seeking, shall whisper wholesome words into the deafened ear, saying: “You need not be envious of those whom the people call great and fortunate; applause need not disturb your composed attitude and your sanity of mind.”

Seneca, Epistles 94:59; cf. SEP3 pp.48–49

The Epicureans, too – who followed a philosophical system founded (c.307 BCE) upon the teachings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BCE) – prescribed the repetition of a fourfold healing formula (*tetrapharmacos*), intended to incline the mind towards a cheerful and positive attitude for the attainment of a happy life:

Do not fear God;
Do not worry about death;
What is good is readily attainable;
What is evil is easy to endure.

Philodēmos, Herculeum Papyrus 1005:4.9–14; cf. in ERWT p.vi

Other exercises were also practised with the intention of self-improvement. Pierre Hadot writes:

In Epicurean communities, friendship (often a term that covered spiritual guidance, among other relationships) had its spiritual exercises such as confession of one’s faults, mutual correction carried out in a fraternal spirit, and examining one’s conscience.

Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, PWLS pp.87, 89

In fact, Epicurus is acknowledged as the first European to have developed a system of ethical training based upon memorization of moralistic sentences or precepts such as the *tetrapharmacos*. These anticipated the spiritual exercises prescribed by Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) by nearly two thousand years. The practice of confession of sins can also be traced back to the Epicureans.

Among the Epicureans, as among the Platonists, the study of music, geometry, astronomy and physics were regarded as spiritual exercises:

We should not think that any other end is served by knowledge of celestial phenomena than freedom from disturbance and firm confidence, just as in other fields of study.

Epicurus, Letter to Phytoclēs, in PWLS p.87

Probably, the most popular guide book of antiquity among the literature created to support spiritual exercises is the *Manual* or *Handbook* (*Encheiridion*) of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55–135 CE). The book was compiled by Arrianus as a brief compendium of excerpts taken from Epictetus' *Discourses*. Through Christian re-workings and paraphrases, the *Manual* had enormous influence upon the formation of Christian monastic ideology:

As in secular philosophy, monastic life presented itself as the practice of spiritual exercises, some of which were specifically Christian, but many of which had been bequeathed by secular philosophy.

Pierre Hadot, What is Ancient Philosophy?, WAPH p.242

The *Manual* and *Discourses* of Epictetus would have been well known to St Paul. His discussion of nature in *1 Corinthians*³ seems to be based upon the *Manual* of Epictetus,⁴ and there are other passages, too, reflecting Stoic belief,⁵ including the well-known acclamation of love in *1 Corinthians*.⁶ According to *Acts*, Paul met with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens.⁷

In the Middle Ages, Christian monastic orders adopted the *Manual* almost literally as a guide to the monastic life. Three Christian paraphrases of the *Manual* dated between the seventh and the fourteenth centuries survive, with the names of Socratēs and other pagan teachers substituted with the names of Christian saints. Some of the paraphrases drew upon the sixth-century Neoplatonist, Simplicius' commentary on the *Manual*.⁸

A Christian commentary on one of the paraphrased versions of the *Manual*, dated to sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries, contains an exhortation to practise philosophy:

Every Christian needs to practise this philosophy whatever other occupation he may decide to pursue: in this resides the perfection of the human being as human being. For the primary form of our perfection is the knowledge of our own self.

Christian Commentary on the Manual of Epictetus, CCME pp.96–98

Spiritual exercises in Christianity came to consist of meditation, mental and interior prayer, and contemplation, together with various ascetic disciplines. These practices are themselves understood in several ways by different practitioners and spiritual directors. Many kinds of spiritual exercise have been devised and described in books, especially meditations on a wide variety of

spiritual and specifically Christian subjects. The intention is to purify the mind and make it ready for higher contemplation.

One of the best-known manuals of such exercises is that of Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Society of Jesus (1534). His book, *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), remains the basic manual of Jesuit training. At the outset, he explains:

By the term ‘spiritual exercises’ we mean every method of examining one’s conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal or mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities, as will be mentioned later. For just as strolling, walking and running are physical exercises, so every method of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all its disordered tendencies, and after it is rid of them, to seek and find God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul, is called a spiritual exercise.

Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, Explanations 1; cf. ILSE p.121, SEIL p.3

Ignatius then goes on to provide a month-long sequence of meditations, rules, instructions, admonitions, warnings, prayers, and ways of examining one’s conscience. Originally intended to form the basis of a thirty-day retreat, they have subsequently been used in a variety of ways, either in condensed form for weekend or eight-day retreats, or spread out over a longer period for domestic use.

Walter Hilton (c.1340–1396) speaks of the many comforts received by the soul who perseveres in these kind of spiritual exercises. These “comforts” include, not only the “love of God” and the “light and spiritual incandescence” of Christ, but many other “savours, sweetnesses, and wonderful feelings”:

A soul is made as perfect as is possible in this life, when it has – by the grace of Jesus and long labour of bodily and spiritual exercise – overcome and destroyed gross desires, passions and irrational impulses within itself, as well as without in the animal nature, and is clothed completely in virtues – for example, in meekness and mildness, in patience and tenderness, in spiritual strength and righteousness, in self-control and wisdom, in faith, hope and love. It receives great comfort from our Lord, not only within, in its own hidden substance – by virtue of the union with our Lord that consists in knowledge and love of God, in his light and spiritual incandescence, in the transforming of the soul in the Godhead – but also many other comforts, savours, sweetnesses and wonderful feelings in various ways, as our Lord vouchsafes to visit his creature here on earth, and as the soul advances and grows in love.

Walter Hilton, Angels’ Song, PAS p.16

The foundation of such practices, he writes, has to be of humility, faith, and complete sincerity:

If you wish to use these spiritual exercises wisely and persevere in them safely, you must begin at the beginning, and there are three things which you need as a secure foundation on which to build; these are humility, firm faith, and a wholehearted intention towards God.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 1:16, LPH p.16

Speaking of the many possible meditations on scriptural passages, the life of Jesus, and so on, he also recommends ringing the changes, to avoid habituation and boredom:

For although the desire and longing of your heart for Jesus should be constant and unchanging, you are at liberty to vary your spiritual exercises in order to stimulate this desire, and they may well be changed when you feel that grace moves you to do so.

The relation of spiritual activities to desire is similar to that of sticks to fire; for the more sticks are laid on the fire, the greater is the fire. Similarly, the more varying the spiritual exercises that a man performs to stimulate his desire for God, the stronger and more ardent it will be. Therefore, . . . consider carefully which activity is best suited to you, and which most fosters your desire for Jesus, and undertake it. Do not deliberately bind yourself to an unchangeable routine which would prevent your heart loving Jesus freely should you receive a special visitation of grace.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:21, LPH p.158

Thomas à Kempis also indicates that variety can be useful:

All cannot use the same kind of spiritual exercises, but one suits this person, and another that. Different devotions are suited also to the seasons, some being best for the festivals, and others for ordinary days. We find some helpful in temptations, others in peace and quietness. Some things we like to consider when we are sad, and others when we are full of joy in the Lord.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 1:19, ICTK p.49

He also adds that missing spiritual exercises slows up progress:

We fail in our purposes in various ways, and the light omission of our spiritual exercises seldom passes without certain loss to our souls.

Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 1:19, ICTK p.48

Classical philosophy and Christianity are not the only Western traditions that have espoused spiritual practices. Among these other traditions have been the various gnostic schools, so maligned by Christianity. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there seems to have been a reluctance among scholars to acknowledge the existence of meditation, contemplation and spiritual practices among gnostic and allied groups. The result has been that terms meaning ‘spiritual practice’ are often mistranslated by scholars, with some renderings completely changing the original meaning. The highest forms of spiritual practice are entirely internal, and translations such as ‘pious works’, ‘pious deeds’, ‘good works’ and so on are quite the reverse of what the original author intended.

In many instances, there is ambiguity as to the meaning, perhaps intentional, but this is by no means true of all such cases. The author of the gnostic *Treatise on the Resurrection*, for instance, writing to a certain Rheginus, concludes with an exhortation to practise meditation as the means of experiencing the true nature of resurrection and of escaping from reincarnation in another body:

It is necessary for everyone to practise a great deal, to gain release from this element (the body) so that he may not wander aimlessly, but rather might recover his former state of being.

On the Resurrection 49; cf. GS p.324, NHS22 pp.156–57

The original rendering – to “practise in many ways” – is obscure, and is more meaningfully rendered as to “practise” or to “meditate a great deal”. In fact, one of the scholars who has translated this passage points out that the word translated here as “practise” also means to lead an ascetic life,⁹ which can be understood in this context as performing spiritual practice. The same translator also comments that the Greek word (*planasthai*) rendered as “wander aimlessly” is sometimes used in other contexts to refer specifically to reincarnation.¹⁰ The author of this treatise is therefore saying that it is necessary to put in much meditation in order to gain release from the body, stop the wanderings in repeated reincarnation, and return to the soul’s original state with God.

The same notion of spiritual practice as the means of escape from the body is found in the Manichaean psalms, where the writer, addressing Jesus, speaks of practising “your holy Wisdom”. It is meditation on Wisdom, the divine Word, that leads to release from birth and death:

Jesus my light, whom I have loved, take me in unto you. . . .
I have constantly practised your holy Wisdom,
which has opened the eyes of my soul to the light of your glory,
and made me see the things that are hidden and that are visible –

The things of the abyss (this world)
and the things of the Height.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXVIII; cf. MPB pp.85–86

This is not religious imagery, but a statement of experience. The practice of the Word of Wisdom has “opened the eyes of my soul”. The inner eye has been opened and the soul has seen both God and the whole of creation, inside and out. This is precisely what is supposed to happen in this kind of spiritual practice.

See also: **good acts, meditation, pious deeds.**

1. Plato, *Phaedo* 67d–e.
2. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 2:1.1.
3. *1 Corinthians* 11:14.
4. Epictetus, *Manual* 1:16.10.
5. See also *Acts* 17:22ff.
6. *1 Corinthians* 13:1–13.
7. *Acts* 17:18.
8. See G. Boter, *Encheiridion of Epictetus*, *EETC* p.87ff.
9. Leyton Bentley, *Gnostic Scriptures*, *GS* p.324 (n.g).
10. Leyton Bentley, *Gnostic Scriptures*, *GS* p.324 (n.h).

study A term sometimes used in translation where the context suggests that meditation, as spiritual practice, would make better sense. See **meditation**.

sumiran (H) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection. See **smaraṇa**.

sun dance An annual ceremonial dance lasting three to four days, practised by some Native North American tribal nations, especially those of the Great Plains; intended for healing purposes and to engender a link with spiritual beings and the Great Spirit; a ceremony that reinforces understanding of the expression, “all my relations (*mitakuye oyasin*)”, which implies that all creatures and all things are related, that no one should kill or be killed, and that all should express gratitude for the gift of life; known by a variety of terms in Native north American languages, such as *wiwanayag wachipi* in Lakota.

Following the established settlement of Europeans in the North American continent, the religious freedom of the many indigenous nations was severely curtailed by American and Canadian law. The intention was that the indigenous people should adopt European religion and culture. The sun dance was one of

the ceremonies banned in this early raft of legislation. This ban was lifted by the Canadian government in 1951, but in the United States, Native Americans did not regain their religious and cultural freedom until the late 1970s. In 1978, following a period of intense activism and legal challenges, Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, which protected their basic civil rights and freedom to practise their traditional religions. The act covered all indigenous peoples of the USA, including the Inuits, Aleuts, and Hawaiians.

The American scholar Nancy Bonvillain (*b.* 1945) explains some of the background to the sun dance ceremony from an anthropologist's perspective:

Among the Lakotas, Cheyennes, Blackfeet, Shoshones, Arapahos and most other tribes of the Great Plains, the annual renewal ceremony occurs during the summertime. This ceremony, called the sun dance, traditionally took place when large groups of people camped together in early summer prior to communal buffalo hunts. Although the buffalo hunts are no longer held, the sun dance is still conducted in its proper season.

The performance of the sun dance varies among different peoples, but certain themes and activities are common throughout the region. In most cases, an individual sponsor makes a pledge to organize the sun dance on behalf of the community. Sponsors may make their pledges as a result of some personal or familial misfortune. For example, if a person or one of his or her relatives is seriously ill, the person might vow to sponsor the dance if the illness is cured. In this case, the ceremony is performed both as a reward and a thanksgiving to the deities for the cure. Sun dances are also pledged in response to spirit messages revealed in dreams or to other omens from the spirit world. Although each year's sun dance is sponsored by an individual, its purpose is to restore health and well-being to the entire community, as well as to restore the productive forces of nature themselves.

Plans for a sun dance begin months before the actual performance. The sponsor selects a ritualist to oversee the dance, and men in the community volunteer to dance in the ceremony. From that time until the dance begins, the men must periodically pray and purify their bodies and minds with sweat baths and fasting.

The sun dance itself spans four days, preceded by several days of preparation. The first preparatory task is selecting a tree to serve as the centre pole in the circular sun dance lodge. The tree is ritually chosen, cut down, and brought to the community. After it is erected in the centre of an open space, the rest of the lodge is built around it. The circular shape of the lodge has its own religious significance, representing the circular shape of the earth and, more abstractly, symbolizing the cyclical path of life and the cyclical changes in the seasons.

During the four days of the actual ceremonial, men and women participate by dancing, singing, and drumming within the sacred space of the sun dance lodge. Prayers are offered to the spirit world, asking for community health, prosperity, and supernatural protection, and offering thanks for the abundance of the past year. The dance sponsor may give expensive gifts to the participants. Originally, warriors would seek visions by cutting their own flesh or injuring themselves in some other fashion, but this is rarely practised today.

Nancy Bonvillain, Native American Religion, NARB pp.50–51

The dancer endeavours to relinquish the self, sacrificing himself in the service of his people. The dancers create a bridge from *Wakan-Tanka*, the creator, to the earth-bound people, the tribe. The dance is physically demanding and requires several weeks of preparation. Over the years, some people have died while performing a sun dance.

In the days before reservation life, sun dancers took no food or water for four days. In modern times, because people are weaker due to diet and lifestyle, the dancers are permitted water. Especially in earlier times, a sharp knife or scalpel is used to cut the skin of the sun dancer on his chest or sometimes on his back. Buffalo bone or wooden pegs are inserted through the incisions. These are tied with cords to the tree (often a cottonwood) in the centre of the dance area. The dancer gradually pulls on the cords by leaning forward and backward. Finally, in an ecstatic thrust the pegs rip from the dancer's skin. Each round in the dance lasts from one to several hours. The drummers play a constant beat imitating the human heart, which activates the heart centre of the dancers. The whole scene becomes like a single living entity. Men wear red costumes and women wear blue:

Since the drum is often the only instrument used in our sacred rites, I should perhaps tell you why it is especially sacred and important to us. It is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe, and its steady strong beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing at the centre of the universe. It is the voice of *Wakan-Tanka*, and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP p.69

One may wonder whether the dancers feel pain when the pegs tear out of their skins; but in the minds of many indigenous peoples, they are not the body, they are spirit. So dancers say they feel no pain when their flesh tears. They are spirit, and the entire ceremony supports this belief. As the dance progresses, they become more connected to the divine, symbolized by the tree – the tree of life. To be in that kind of meditative state is a sacred thing, and as such, great respect is offered to the dancers who offer their bodies as

a conduit for spirit. For the seed of spirituality to grow, it must be planted in the soil of appreciation and humility. The dancer must have these in his heart. Otherwise, he will fail:

The Great Spirit has shown us that, if you cut an upper limb of this tree (cottonwood) crosswise, there you will see in the grain a perfect five pointed star, which to us, represents the presence of the Great Spirit. Also, perhaps you have noticed that even in the very lightest breeze you can hear the voice of the cottonwood tree; this we understand is its prayer to the Great Spirit, for not only men, but all things and all beings pray to Him continually in differing ways.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP p.75

The sun dance is spiritual food for a human being, is a sincere expression of appreciation for life, a connection with the Divine. For a dancer attached to the tree, despite there being a large group of supporters around him, he is completely unaware of everybody else. The information he receives, though, is intuitively shared by everyone at the sun dance. It is an unspoken alliance. Some dancers also spirit travel, and experience inner light and sound.

The Native American perspective is that of a living personal experience – different from that of an anthropologist. Fools Crow, who was a healer as well as a holy man, explains that the dancers are conduits for the spiritual energy that is used for healing:

Wakan-Tanka and *Tunkashila* ... are more concerned about the survival of the nation than they are about the survival of any one individual. That is why, in the sun dances, we make both curing and healing available to everyone who wishes to receive them. The dancers become hollow bones (pure channels) during the four days of dancing, and they lay their hands on people to pass on the power for curing and healing that has filled them as they've danced their prayers. They spread strength and hope so that our nation will be uplifted and will want to continue on into the future. One person can not assure this, but a healed and united nation can.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.120

Using what he called a 'concentration tool' in the form of an ornamented stick, Fools Crow created for himself a way to regenerate his inner energies during everyday life, much as takes place during a sun dance. Thomas Mails observes:

As I have said, it is evident that what Fools Crow had done with this mental meditation tool (his regeneration stick) was to do a miniature version of the sun dance performance, and in so doing he was able to

experience in a short time all of the regenerating benefits of the great ceremony. Other men and women on the reservation were only doing the sun dance as an annual affair, but *Wakan-Tanka* had given the holy man a way to continuously experience the dance and harvest its powerful benefits. For Fools Crow, the dance had become an ongoing fountain of energy, transference, expansion, peace, fertility, and transcendence that he could call upon whenever he needed to.

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.81

See also: **concentration tools, visioning.**

suññatānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of the Emptiness (*suññatā*); contemplation of the Void. See **anupassanā**.

surat Shabd (H/Pu) *Lit.* consciousness (*surat*) + Word (*Shabd*). *Surat* means remembrance, recollection, or thinking about something; it also means awareness, especially a mystical awareness or consciousness of the Divine; hence, inner attention or consciousness. Mystically, *surat* is also used for the hearing power of the soul, the faculty that hears the music of the divine Word within, and which is developed as a result of inner attention, focus, and consciousness. It is this faculty that enables the soul to listen to the melody of the *Shabd*.

Surat Shabd is also used, by inference, as an expression for the soul, signifying the essential unity of the soul and the *Shabd*. Together with expressions such as *surat Shabd yoga*, *surat Shabd abhyās* and *surat Shabd mārg*, it also refers to the path (*mārg*) or practice (*abhyās*) of uniting the soul with the *Shabd* or the union (*yoga*) of the soul with the *Shabd* – the practice of listening to the music of the divine Word or primary emanation of God. *Yoga* literally means ‘union’, but it has also come to mean practice. *Surat Shabd yoga*, *surat Shabd abhyās* or *surat Shabd mārg* are not, therefore, amenable to a simple translation that conveys all the undertones of meaning in the original language.

Surat Shabd yoga is described as the highest form of *yoga* since it takes the soul out of the body, past the regions of the mind, through the higher regions of pure spirit that lie above the mind, and back to God. Most other forms of *yoga* practice leave their practitioners within the body or take them only as far as *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’, the thousand-petalled lotus), which is the central powerhouse of the astral realm, or to *Brahman*, which – according to the *sants* – is the realm of the universal mind, a region that they have called *trikuṭī*.

The practice of the *Shabd* gives permanent release from birth and death. The *sants* who teach it say that the path has been taught by all perfect *sants* in all ages, where it has been called by a variety of names. It lays emphasis on meditation on the *Shabd* only, and on leading a life that is conducive to

that practice. It gives no importance to any outward practices or forms of worship or reverence.

Surat Shabd practice is regarded by the *sants* who teach it as the highest form of worship. In fact, they say that it is the only form of worship which is acceptable to God, in the sense that this is the only practice which can take a soul back to Him. Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990) says:

The true form of worship which is always acceptable to the Lord is *Shabd abhyās*. All else continues to bind us in this vast prison house of good and evil *karma*. We have to contact the Word which is resounding within the temple of the living God.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Discourse, in MPSM p.78

He also compares *surat Shabd yoga* with *haṭha yoga* and *rāja yoga*:

Haṭha yoga, I may point out, is an excellent discipline for the body. *Rāja yoga* is better, but that too does not enable you to control the mind fully, nor does it finish your series of births and deaths, for the seeds of *karma* are not destroyed by that method. *Surat Shabd yoga* enables you to ‘roast’ the seeds of *karma*, as it were, so that they cannot sprout again. Mind can only be fully controlled by a power which has its origin beyond the mind, and that is the divine Sound.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat 106, LOSM p.180

And similarly:

What little *karma* we accumulate here is taken care of by the daily practice prescribed by the master. The *pralabdh* or fate *karma* has to be gone through anyway. Then the master helps the disciple to destroy the reserve or *siñchit karma* by means of *Shabd abhyās*, the practice of the Sound Current. When the disciple reaches *trikuṭī* – the causal region – which contains the seeds of this *siñchit karma*, or we might say it contains this *karma* in seed form, then with the help of the master and by long practice of *Shabd abhyās*, these seeds are rendered incapable of germination. And this is not mere metaphor.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat 92, LOSM p.165

Hence, he says:

Surat Shabd yoga, or the discipline of attaching the *surat* to the divine Sound within, is the highest mystic training and takes you beyond the reach of mind and *māyā*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat 360, LOSM p.352

Indian *sants* of the more distant past have also been direct in extolling the merits of *surat Shabd* and *surat Shabd yoga*. They maintain that only the practice of the *Shabd* (also called *Nām*, the Name) with the help of a master of the Word will lead to conquest of the five passions and the negative power (*Kāl*, ‘Time’, ‘Death’), and to liberation of the soul from birth and death. Kabīr advises:

Consider this half-stanza to be the essence of a million scriptures:

“*Nām* is true, the world is false;”

Realize this by attuning the consciousness (*surat*) with *Shabd*, O Kabīr.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Updesh kā ang, Sorṭhā 54, KSS p.103; cf. KWGN p.157

Guru Nānak (1469–1539) writes:

The lotus flower floats untouched upon the surface of the water,
and the duck swims through the stream;
With one’s consciousness on the Word (*surat Sabad*),
one crosses (*tarī’ai*) over the terrifying world-ocean (*bhav sāgar*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 938, AGK

Without awareness of the *Shabd* (*surat Sabad*),
one comes and goes in reincarnation;
He loses his honour in this coming and going.
The body . . . is just a pile of barren dirt:
without the Name, what honour can you have?
Bound and gagged throughout the four ages,
there is no liberation.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1031, AGK

Without practice of the *Shabd*, the mind remains in confusion and with its sense of separate identity:

You act in corruption and put on ostentatious shows,
but without awareness of the *Shabd* (*surat Sabad*),
you have fallen into confusion.
You suffer great pain from the disease of egotism:
following the *guru*’s teachings (*gurmat*),
you shall be rid of this disease.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 906, AGK

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh (1818–1878) writes:

Only by listening to the *Shabd* is the mind controlled:
it is unaffected by millions of other practices.
Only by listening to the *Shabd* is it subdued. . .

No other practice proves as effective,
 so be attached to the practice of *Shabd* . . .
 When you practise *surat Shabd*,
 only then will your mind achieve some stillness.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:9.1, 7, 9, SBP p.93

He also writes that the practice of *Shabd* is the only way to escape from the cycle of birth and death:

The learned have wearied themselves
 reading the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, *Smṛitis*, and other scriptures.
 But without a master and without *surat Shabd*
 no one can cross the ocean of existence.
 After due consideration have I chosen to say all this:
 O beloved of your master,
 please accept it while there is still time.
Rādhā Swāmī has said this for your understanding:
 now raise your soul through the opening of the inner sky.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 14:12.14–17,

SBP p.114; cf. SBPS pp.126–27

Contact with the *Shabd* comes about through the blessings of and devotion to a spiritual master of that *Shabd*:

I have become a slave at my master's holy feet
 and to those holy feet I have tied my faith, my hopes.
 He has given me the path of *surat Shabd* (*surat Shabd mārag*),
 and in his mercy he has made me his own.
 I am constantly engaged in practice (*abhyās*),
 in the hope that one day I may transcend my body,
 and contact that subtle *Shabd*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 8:2.7–9, SBP p.75; cf. SBPS p.59

Accept that humility, submission and devotion to a master
 are the way for the present age.
 With a pure and still mind raise the banner of *Shabd* to the sky.
 Through the inner path of *surat Shabd* (*surat Shabd mārag*)
 attain the regions of the five (sounds).
 Climb the ladder of *Shabd* step by step,
 and reach *sach khand*, the region of *Sat Nām*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 8:17.20–23, SBP p.85; cf. SBPS p.83

He maintains that only contact with the *Shabd* can lift the mind and soul out of the confusion of intellectual doctrines:

Kāl ('Time', 'Death', *i.e.* universal mind)
 has lured people into a vast network
 of rites and rituals, superstition and hypocrisy.
 He has deceived scholars
 through their intellectual self-indulgence,
 and preachers through their conceit.
 Tied down by the knot of matter and spirit,
 they proclaim hollow doctrines.
 They do not follow the path (*rāh*) of *surat Shabd*.
 They are deceived by this adversary, the mind,
 which never gives up its perverse ways.
 Do not keep their company,
 for they will besiege you, destroy you.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 22:2.11–16, SBP p.188, SBPS p.255

He therefore summarizes:

In this age, one cannot succeed in any other way except by devotion to the *satguru* and the practice of *surat Shabd yoga*. All other forms of worship are like striking at the snake hole. The snake will not be killed this way. It is likely to reappear at any time. The proper way is to catch the snake (mind), and this will be done only by devotion to the *satguru* and the *Shabd*. By no other means will it be caught. Those who will not accept these words will gain nothing, and those who follow the instructions of such will also come to grief.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Prose 2:121, SBAT pp.80–81

See also: **Rādhā Swāmī mat** (►4), **sant mat** (►4).

sweat lodge (Lakota) An enclosure used for the Native North American sweat-lodge rite; also called a purification lodge or stone-people lodge; by extension, the rite itself, which is commonly known as a 'sweat'; originally peculiar to the many tribes of Plains Indians, but more recently adopted by other Indian nations; known in Lakota as an *initipi*, *inipi*, *onikare*, or *tunkan tipi*.

A sweat lodge is constructed as a dome out of a low framework of twelve or sixteen bent-over saplings, generally willow, covered with blankets or animal skins to block out the light. The door of the lodge faces east. An earth mound is raised just outside the door, dug into which is a fire pit containing rocks; a second mound is formed that partially encircles the first. The fire represents the sun, and the second the crescent moon. The two together symbolize the outer world. The sweat lodge itself symbolizes the inner world.

Since a sweat lodge is constructed for sacred rites, each stage is accompanied by prayer. Upon completion, a burning log is brought in, and in

order to purify the lodge, the leader of the sweat-lodge rite smokes a pipe of sweetgrass, which burns with the distinctive scent of vanilla. The pipe is then taken outside and placed on the earth mound. The other participants then enter the lodge and sit in a circle on fragrant sage leaves. The pipe is again brought in and smoked.

The hot rocks are then brought in and placed in a central fireplace or pit. The pipe is returned to its place on the earth mound outside, and the door is closed. Water is sprinkled on the rocks to create hot steam. During the course of the rite, the door is opened four times, representing the four ages, a term with numerous symbolic interpretations among the many Indian nations. On the last occasion, the participants leave the lodge, emerging from the darkness into the light signifying freedom from the material world. All impurity is believed to be left behind in the sweat lodge. Like a sauna, the heat generated can be intense. If a participant wishes to cool off and go outside for a while, he uses the expression "*mitakuye oyasin* (all my relatives)", which signifies that all beings and all inanimate things are related and should be treated with respect.

The purpose of the rite is inner purification, to engender humility and induce the sense of a spiritual rebirth. It includes prayers to invoke the spirits for help, guidance, and healing. It may also be undertaken as a form of relaxation or for healing of particular ailments. Those of advanced purity may experience inner visions or spirit travel. The lodge is pitch black inside so that the spirits who enter can be seen as flashes of light.

The Lakota Sioux holy man Black Elk (1863–1950) explains some of the symbolism associated with the *inipi* or *onikare*:

The rite of the *onikare* utilizes all the powers of the universe; earth, and the things which grow from the earth, water, fire, and air. The water represents the thunder beings, who come fearfully but bring goodness; for the steam which comes from the rocks, within which is the fire, is frightening, but it purifies us so that we may live as *Wakan-Tanka* wills, and He may even send to us a vision if we become very pure.

When we use the water in the sweat lodge we should think of *Wakan-Tanka* who is always flowing, giving His power and life to everything; we should even be as water, which is lower than all things, yet stronger even than the rocks.

The sweat lodge is made from twelve or sixteen young willows, and these too have a lesson to teach us, for in the fall their leaves die and return to the earth, but in the spring they come to life again. So too, men die, but live again in the real world of *Wakan-Tanka*, where there is nothing but the spirits of all things; and this true life we may know here on earth if we purify our bodies and minds, thus coming closer to *Wakan-Tanka*, who is all purity.

Black Elk summarizes the experience:

These rites of the *inipi* are very *wakan* (holy), and are used before any great undertaking for which we wish to make ourselves pure or for which we wish to gain strength; and in many winters past our men, and often the women, made the *inipi* even every day, and sometimes several times a day, and from this we received much of our power. Now that we have neglected these rites, we have lost much of this power; it is not good, and I cry when I think of it. I pray often that the Great Spirit will show to our young people the importance of these rites.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP p.43

The *inipi* is not only used to purify but also to strengthen and heal those who participate. Many healings take place inside the *inipi*. Frank Fools Crow (c.1890–1989), a healer as well as a highly respected social and spiritual leader of the Oglala Sioux, explains what happens at such times. Fools Crow demonstrated on many occasions that he possessed power over material things, and his particular description and experience would have been unique to him:

There is a mood in the lodge that is unlike any other time. It feels like it is filled with pressure and energy. My body tingles and shakes from it. This happens to the patients too. They don't know exactly what is going on, but they know it is something awesome, mysterious, and even frightening. Loud sounds are heard of eagles and hawks crying and animals roaring, along with claps of thunder. We will hear singers singing, and drums and rattles playing. Usually, the lodge itself begins to shake and rattle. The offerings that are tied to the roof swing back and forth. Sometimes, a steaming rock will even jump out of the fire pit. Often, the people will cry out that they feel something very hot, like a large hand, touching their bodies. Then they will say they feel this hand pulling their illness out of them, and that it really hurts. By the time the ceremony is over, and it sometimes goes on for an hour or more, these people are always completely cured.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.115

During the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee on the Oglala Sioux reservation in South Dakota, a white medical doctor, Russell Buss, was flown in to help the Native Americans. During this time, he experienced the *inipi* rite, in the company of Crow Dog and later Black Elk, both Lakota holy men. Russell Buss provides an account as a newcomer to the experience:

I did nothing medically. The medicine men ran the show. They had strong medicine and there was no reason for me to do anything. So I

got in the car and we drove up to the sacred *tipi*. A sweat lodge was set up there, which is like a small *hogon*. The *inipi* is covered with blankets and hides and in the middle there's a pit with white hot rocks. There were blankets around the pit and you went in with no clothes on. You were allowed a towel and your medicine bag. So you go in there and sit around the circumference of the pit. The first one I did was with Crow Dog and Dennis Banks. They closed the thing up and went to it. They had a big bucket of water and you stay in there until all the water is gone. They steam you and it got so hot I had blisters on my shoulders. They didn't tell me how to get out. If you say, "All my relations," they let you out. It's kind of a humbling term, a calling out to your relatives and ancestors. You can't fathom what it is like. It is so hot! You sit there and he pours the water on there and there's two seconds before you know it's going to hit you – an entire front of hot steam. And you can't breathe. You can't hold still, it hurts so much. And the whole time you're in there, the medicine man is saying prayers and chanting in both English and Sioux.

The prayers were asking for strength in battles that were going to come up, solidarity with all the Indians that were in there and then praying for all the races: black, brown, red, yellow, and white. Always praying for the whites. They made the same distinction that the Vietnamese made, that they were fighting the US government and not the people. Hoping that the white brothers and sisters would have their eyes opened. . . . There were times when I was on the verge of tears. How they could pray for whites, just blew me out. And being accepted there. It was so hot. You get delirious, and you think, "Oh God, I'm going to fall into that fire." You're not more than four inches from the pit. And you say, "*Ha-u!*" Not, "How" like in the movies, but, "*Ha-u*". It's sort of an Indian, "Right on!"

When I came out of there, the sun was just going down, half a sun over the hill. I had just gone through an incredibly moving experience and I felt like I was going to pass out. I could barely stand up, but I felt so powerful. I was no longer afraid of dying. I can't really describe the feeling I had there. It was probably the most important spiritual strengthening experience of my life.

Russell Buss, in "*The Occupation of Wounded Knee*," OWKG

Fools Crow describes it from the Native American viewpoint:

Wakan-Tanka taught me during one of my vision quests what the purification lodge is. It is much more than a willow, half-dome-shape structure. Its true shape is that of a ball, and the bottom half of the ball is underground. Once the above-ground part is finished and covered

over, and everything, like the sage and the other items I use, is in it, the lodge becomes the dwelling place of *Wakan-Tanka* and *Tunkashila* above, of Grandmother Earth below, and of the Persons in the Four Directions. Then when I enter it and do my rituals I am sitting on the great plane of the earth in the midst of them all.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.92

John Lame Deer (1903–1976), another Lakota holy man, also describes the experience of the sweat lodge:

You sit there quietly in the dark, thinking what the *inipi* is for. You close your eyes, listen to the hiss of the icy water on the heated stones, listen to what they have to tell you – a little spark coming into your mind. The sweat house shakes and trembles as the men sing “*Tunkashila, hi-yay, hi-yay.*” The heat, the earth power, it hits you. You inhale it, get filled with it. That power penetrates into you, heals you. That steam stops at the skin, but that earth power penetrates your body and mind. It cures many sicknesses – arthritis, rheumatism. It heals the wounds of your mind. This *inipi* is our little church. It is not like some white churches where people sit in pews, showing off their fine clothes. The *inipi* is different. There is no bragging and impurity here. Just naked humans, huddling in the dark, close to the earth and to the spirit. If the spirit is with you, you could pick up the glowing rock and it would not hurt you.

John Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions, LDSV p.189

Black Elk speaks of the rock spirits who enter the lodge, spirit helpers believed to guard the earth, and who aid in diagnosing and curing patients in the sweat lodge:

Now we come to the word sweat lodge. That’s just a nickname. Naturally, when we crawl in and hot rocks come in, we sweat. We perspire. So they call it a sweat house, or sauna – you could call it that way, too. But the spirit told us that that term is not ours. He said, “I will tell you the truth – *tunkan tipi*.” That’s the real name – *tunkan tipi*. *Tun* means ‘birth’, and *kan* means ‘age’. The word *tipi* in Lakota language means a ‘windbreaker’ or ‘shelter’... And *tezi* means ‘stomach’ or ‘womb’. So this lodge is a *tezi*. That’s where the stone people (rock spirits) live. They contain all the elements that form the human structure. Then we put that fire back into those stone people. So there’s a fire. There’s also a fire that lives in you. There’s a spark in there. We call it soul or spirit.

Black Elk, Sacred Ways of a Lakota, BESW p.70

In conversation with Thomas Mails, Frank Fools Crow mentions the visit of the four hundred and five white stone men:

“I have not told you why in most instances only some of the white stone men come to help me with a curing or healing.” He took a stick and drew a large circle on the ground. “This is the whole world,” he said as he used the stick to point at the circle. “The four hundred and five white stone men help people everywhere who love *Wakan-Tanka*, not just the Native Americans. Some of the white stone men are busy here, and others there – in China, or Africa, or Germany.”

“You will notice that I say they all come, but I do not say they all stay. They all come to make a quick visit to let me know they support me, but then most of them return to what they were doing.”

“The higher powers . . . are not governed by time as we are. They can be gone, but will still not be gone, because there is no clock where they live. Everything they do is done at once. I could make a true puzzle by saying that they are back at the same time as they left.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.117

It is believed that the *inipi* is connected to Grandmother Earth, and in another image, the *inipi* is described as the *tezi* (womb) of Grandmother Earth where participants go in order to be reborn. The *tezi* is an opening or entrance under the *inipi* that leads into the secrets of Grandmother Earth. The *inipi* is the covering that hides the entrance (*tezi*).

Thomas Mails asked Fools Crow about his experience when seeing *Wakan-Tanka* in the *inipi*, and in particular his experience of the four “Persons”, the primary spirits of the four directions. He interprets “the Lights” he sees within himself as particular spirits, depending upon their colour:

“How is what you do in spirit travel different than sending and receiving information through the smoke and the individual messengers who serve the Persons who are in each direction?”

“It is a face-to-face thing. I see them.”

“You see them?” I responded in surprise as I remembered the biblical statement that no one could look upon God and live.¹ “What do they look like?”

“Lights,” he replied matter-of-factly, and waited for that to sink in. . . .

“Are all of the Lights the same colour?” (I asked).

“No. *Wakan-Tanka* is a huge white light. *Tunkashila* is a huge blue light. Grandmother Earth is a big green light. Each of the Persons is the colour of his direction.”

I tried to absorb this while Fools Crow continued. “You want to know how I can visit with a Light,” he said.

“Yes.”

“I speak to it, and a voice answers me out of the light. Each voice has its own distinct quality, so that I could, if I heard it someplace else, probably know who was speaking to me.”

“Did they, in your first visit with them, tell you who they are?”

“No. I knew from their colours.”

“What kinds of things do you talk about?”

“Things that help me see and understand what is going on in the world, and what will be happening in the future. They also tell me what I should do about this, and they enable me to prophesy.”

“Do they tell you about specific things, or just about things in general?”

“Usually general matters.”

“Things that have to do with the entire world, or just about your Teton Sioux people?”

“Mostly about my people, but they give me some information about the rest of the world too.”

“What do you talk about with Grandmother Earth?”

“Pollution problems and what we can do to save the earth.”

“So Grandmother Earth is concerned about her well-being also,” I commented.

Fools Crow nodded gravely, and then continued, “She feels things just like we do, so to make her feel better another thing I do is thank her constantly for providing the food, the water, and the plants we need to survive.”

“Is there more that you talk about with the other Lights?”

“My visions. They help me interpret them, and also the visions and dreams of people I am doing ceremonies with.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.93–95

1. *Exodus* 33:20.

taḥannuth (A) *Lit.* devotion to the worship of God; a period spent worshipping God in seclusion; a word of uncertain origin, possibly an Arabicization of the Hebrew *teḥinnōth* (prayers or voluntary devotions in addition to the official liturgy) or *teḥinnā* (supplication, cry for favour); seemingly from the same Arabic root as *taḥannatha* (to practice piety, to perform works of devotion);¹ commonly used for the annual periods of seclusion passed by Muḥammad in a cave on Mount Ḥirā', during the month of *Ramaḍān*; said in the *ḥadīth* to have been practised by other individuals as well as Muḥammad. According to a *ḥadīth* attributed to his wife, 'Āyishah:

The first (form), with which began the revelation to the Messenger of *Allāh*, was the true vision in sleep. And he did not see any vision except that it came like the bright gleam of dawn. Thenceforth, solitude became dear to him and he used to seclude himself in the cave of Mount Ḥirā', where he would engage in *taḥannuth* (and that is a worship for a number of nights) before returning to his family and getting provisions again for this purpose.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1:301; cf. HSM

See also: **Islam** (1.10).

1. See “taḥannuth,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, EI10.

tàijíquán (C) *Lit.* great (*tài*) ultimate (*jí*) fist (*quán*); supreme ultimate boxing; a traditional form of meditational physical exercise or relaxation; in Daoism, a form of meditation based on physical movements; in alternative romanizations, *t'ai chi chüan* or *tai chi chuan*.

The historical origins of *tàijíquán* are uncertain. Many believe that it was first developed by master Zhāng Sānfēng some time between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. However, since the earliest written mention of any connection between Zhāng Sānfēng and *tàijíquán* appears in the nineteenth century, researchers have serious doubts about this claim, though the origins of the art may be traced back to at least the seventeenth century.¹ The meditation aspect of the practice incorporates focused awareness on a sequence of flowing and co-ordinated body movements synchronized with breathing patterns. The object is to harmonize *yīn* and *yáng* (negative and positive, female and male, *etc.*), to relax the body, to unblock the bodily meridians of life energy (*qì*), and to increase overall health.

See also: **qìgōng**.

1. See Stanley Henning, “Ignorance, Legend and Taijiquan,” *ILT*; see also “Chen Wangting,” *Wikipedia*, ret. August 2017.

tan (J) *Lit.* place; the place assigned to a Zen Buddhist monk or nun in the *sōdō* (*sangha* hall, communal living hall) and *zendō* (meditation hall) in a Zen monastery; the name of the monk or nun is generally written on a slip of paper or inscribed on a small wooden plaque, known as a *tanpyō* (itself often abbreviated to *tan*), which is hung above his or her *tan*.

Looking into a *sōdō* or *zendō* from the main entrance, raised platforms (*tan*) run along the side walls. The platform on the left is the *jikijitsu tan*,

the *jikijitsu* being the monastic supervisor who supervises meditation in the *zendō*, as well as the timings of meals, bedtime, getting up, and so on. The right-hand *tan* is the *tantō tan*, the *tantō* (head of the *tan*) being an experienced senior monk, who assists with the teaching. There may also be an additional platform (*nakatan*) between the two main platforms and an outside platform (*gaitan*) for those who arrive late or have a cold or some other minor ailment that might disturb the other monks. *Tan* refers to the entire platform as well as the individual places, and by a further extension it also refers to the row of monks practising *zazen*. The *tan* occupied by a monk or nun is assigned according to the length of time he or she has been in the monastery, and is thus an indicator of their position within the monastic hierarchy.

The platforms are usually made of wood and are covered with individual straw mats (*tatami*) a little less than a metre wide. In the *sōdō*, the platforms and mats are something less than a metre off the ground and about two metres long, allowing for sleeping and stretching. This is the monk's personal living space. In the *zendō*, the platforms and mats are considerably narrower, since they are only required for sitting.

See also: **zazen**.

tantra (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* warp, web, loom; from the Sanskrit *tan* (to stretch, spread, extend, expand; hence, to promulgate) + *tra* (to protect, preserve, defend, rescue, liberate, save); hence, that which promulgates teaching concerning salvation or liberation; doctrine, teaching, system; specifically, a collection of Hindu and Buddhist treatises with a magical, esoteric and mystical content, which elaborate on the fundamental beliefs of these two traditions. The history of tantrism is uncertain, but it is generally thought that Hindu *tantra*, which flourished from the eighth or ninth centuries until the fourteenth century, originated around at least 500–600 CE, with Buddhist tantrism following rapidly in its wake.

Many of the Hindu texts are in the form of dialogues between *Shiva* and his consort, *Pārvatī*, who represents the gentle aspect of the Great Goddess, *Mahādevī*. *Mahādevī* is regarded as the *devī* (goddess) who encompasses all other *devīs*, and is variously identified by different groups with *Durgā*, *Kālī*, and other goddesses. In Hinduism, *Shiva* is portrayed as the primal ascetic or yogi who gave *yoga* to mankind; he is believed, for instance, to have revealed the eighty-four (out of a possible 8,400,000) *āsanas* (postures) of *haṭha yoga*.

Tantrism is an anglicized name given by scholars to the spiritual movement that flourished in medieval India, and which produced the many texts (*tantras*). Since it is difficult to identify a unique tantric belief system, the notion of tantrism as a specific faith is generally regarded as a creation of Western scholars.

Several derivations of *tantra* have been suggested, all focusing around a similar meaning. The *Kāmika Āgama* says:

It is called *tantra* because it promulgates (*tanoti*) great knowledge concerning *Tattva* (Reality) and *mantra* (verbal formulae), and because it saves (*trāṇa*).

Shaiva Siddhānta, Kāmika Āgama, in SSEC pp.50–51

The *tantras* themselves speak of the creation and dissolution of the universe; the worship of God personified as one of numerous male and female deities such as *Shiva* and *Shakti*; the fulfilment of all desires; the attainment of supernatural powers; and various methods of attaining mystical states of consciousness, liberation, and reunion with the Divine by means of meditation. Some of the later texts deal with profound wisdom or pure knowledge of Reality (*tattvajñāna*). The underlying understanding is that the universe is a manifestation of the divine energy (*shakti*) that creates and sustains it.

Tantric practices may be highly ritualistic or entirely meditational. Ritualistic practices, often complex, include stylized gestures (*mudrās*), intoning of sacred syllables and *mantras*, visualization of the deities being worshipped, and so on. In the more esoteric texts, the practices of *hatha yoga*, *rāja yoga*, *prāṇāyāma* and similar disciplines are described and encouraged.

Due to the negative observations of some early commentators and translators, the *tantras* are often understood in the West to encourage various licentious rites and sexual debauchery. In fact, this is a secondary development that resulted in two tantric schools: *Dakṣiṇāchāra* (the right-hand path) and *Vāmāchāra* (the left-hand path). The *Dakṣiṇāchāra* school requires its followers to observe a strict spiritual discipline, and surrender to the divine Mother in her many forms.

The rites of the *Vāmāchāra* school are based on the *pañcha-makāras* (five M's), which represent the 'forbidden things' of Hindu culture. They are: *madhya* (wine), *māmsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (a type of parched grain) and *maithuna* (sexual union). The *Dakṣiṇāchārīs* employ these only symbolically, using substitutions: coconut water or milk for wine; salt, ginger, sesame, wheat, or garlic for meat; eggplant, radish, or water chestnut for fish; unmilled rice for *mudrā* (parched grain); and an offering of flowers or a gesture of the hands for *maithuna*.

These symbols originated in the attempt to offer these lower aspects of human existence to the divine Mother, and thus to rise above their negative influence by seeing the Divine in everything. Later, the symbols were taken literally, as a licence to practise the very things their originators regarded as debasing. In the higher tantrism, the devotees are taught to look upon all women as the embodiment of *Shakti*, the divine Mother (*aka. Chāṇḍī* and *Durgā*), as in the tantric chant:

O Mother, you are the embodiment of all knowledge.
 Wherever there is intelligence and learning,
 you are manifested there.
 All women are your forms.
 You have your being in the universe,
 filling and permeating all things.

Tantric Prayer to Chāṇḍī; cf. in EIL5 p.4292

Tantric scriptures are also known as the *Āgamas* – revelations in harmony with the revelations of the *Vedas*. They are classified into three main groups, depending upon the deity they venerate: *Vaiṣṇava* (*Pāñcharātra*), *Shaiva* and *Shākta*, venerating *Vishṇu*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, respectively. Additionally, there are the many *Āgamas* of the Tibetan Buddhist school. Buddhist tantrism is almost Hinduism in Buddhist garb, and many of the texts simply supplant Hindu concepts with their Buddhist parallels. *Prāṇāyāma*, the repetition of *mantras* and various other yogic practices are also advocated. As well as liberation from birth and death, the pursuit of magical and supernatural powers is also encouraged, as in the Hindu texts. In fact, in many instances, traditional Buddhist teaching is clearly being undermined.

In modern practice, the *tantras* refer to the *Shākta Āgamas* and the teachings contained in them, and what follows here refers primarily to these texts. The authorship of the *Shākta Āgamas* is unknown. According to tradition they were the utterances of *Shiva* to his consort *Shakti*, also called *Mahādevī*, the divine Mother. They came from his fifth or central mouth, and were to be kept secret from the uninitiated. They are believed to have originated in the sixth or seventh century CE.

There are different tantric schools with variant traditions and distinctions that are little understood outside their immediate band of adherents. There are, in all, seventy-seven *Shākta Āgamas*, five of which teach practices leading to knowledge and liberation, sixty-four teach ways of developing magical and supernatural powers, and eight aim at both. Many of the *Āgamas* range over a wide variety of subjects – scientific, religious, medical, speculative, and so on. Considerable use is made of *mantras*, particularly mystic syllables (*bījas*, seeds) such as *Aum*, *krīm*, *shrīm*, etc., the repetition of which is said to result in supernatural powers. They are inclusive, making no distinctions of caste or sex, and forbidding *satī* (immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre).

The philosophical position of the *tantras* is non-dualistic. They consider the individual soul to be identical with *Shiva-Shakti*. *Shiva* is understood as pure, omnipresent, impersonal, and inactive consciousness. *Shiva* is the Absolute, while *Shakti* is the creative power of the Absolute. The creation is her play, just as *māyā* is seen as the projecting and concealing power of *Brahman* in *Advaita Vedānta*. But ultimately, on the transcendental plane, the two are understood to be the same.

There is only one divine Source, and this is the state of *sat-chit-ānanda* (truth-consciousness-bliss). God the Mother has within herself the seeds of creation. At the end of a cycle she gives birth to a new universe. The universe is formed out of the collective desires of all beings held, like all else, within the divine Mother. Projecting from her formless state, she gives rise to form. At the end of a vast span of time, a Day of *Brahmā*, the creation is withdrawn into the great causal Womb (*Yoni*), and again, when the creative urge makes itself felt, the creation once again comes into being. Individual souls then make their appearance in forms that reflect the *karma* they had accumulated at the end of the previous cycle.

At death, souls move on according to their *karma*: to heaven, if they have lived virtuously, but with self-regard (*sakāma*); or to hell if they have lived evil lives. But ultimately they return to rebirth on the physical plane. Only those who have lived and worked selflessly (*nishkāma-karma*) are liberated after death and realize *Brahman*. The universe exists purely as a place where the fruits of *karma* may be reaped. The forms of life are thus the stairs (*sopāna*) upon which man may mount to the blissful Infinite.

It is clear that the higher teaching of the *tantras* is drawn from traditional Hindu scriptures. There are even references to God the Mother in the *Ṛig Veda*:

I am the energy in *Brahman*, I am the Mother of all. . .
It is I who have penetrated all the worlds with My power
and am holding them in their places.

Ṛig Veda 10:125.3, 7, in SHI p.146

In its higher aspect, tantrism is an extension of the ancient yogic tradition. Sometimes, the *tantras* are even called the fifth *Veda* by those who regard them as authoritative. Some passages are reminiscent of the *Upanishads*:

He is one;
He is forever.
He is the Truth, one without a second.
He is the supreme Being.
He is self-effulgent, ever shining.
He is eternal consciousness and bliss.

He is unchangeable, self-existent, and serene.
He is above all attributes (*guṇas*).
He is the witness of all, the self of all, pervading everything.
He is the omnipresent.

He, the eternal, dwelling concealed
in the heart of all beings.

Himself devoid of senses,
He is the illuminator of all the senses,
the source of their powers.

He knows all, but none knows Him.
The world of forms appears real
because He, the ground of all existence, is real...

Each one does his work
by the power of Him who dwells within and directs.
None is ever independent of Him.
Through fear of Him the wind blows,
the sun gives heat, the clouds shower seasonable rain,
and the trees in the forest flower...

All gods and goddesses – nay, the whole universe
from *Brahmā* to a blade of grass – are His forms.
When He is pleased, the universe is pleased...

As all rivers flow into the ocean,
so all worship (offered to any deity)
reaches Him as the ultimate goal...

To attain liberation with ease and joy,
there is no way but to worship Him,
to meditate upon Him, and to pray to Him.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 2:34–38, 43–44, 46–47, 50, 52; cf. GLMT p.27, in SHI p.151

The ultimate goal or *siddhi* (attainment) of the *tantras* is liberation through direct experience of the union of the true self with *Shiva*. This direct knowledge or experience can be had through effort and discipline (*sādhana*), which is thus fundamental to the *tantras*. Practice is all important, since direct experience is the real test of the validity of the truths revealed in the texts.

The *sādhana*s are to be undertaken only under the guidance of a *guru* after receiving initiation (*dīkshā*) from him. The *tantras* mention two kinds of initiation – *Shāmbhavī-dīkshā* and *mantra-dīkshā*. *Shāmbhavī* is a name of *Shiva*, and this kind of initiation is also called *shakti-*, *vedha-* (penetrating, piercing) and *Shiva-dīkshā*. In it, the *guru* conveys his own spiritual power to the disciple, who experiences an expansion of consciousness associated with the rising of the *kuṇḍalinī*. This kind of experience at the time of initiation is rare, but *kuṇḍalinī yoga* is an important aspect of *tantra*. *Kuṇḍalinī* means ‘coiled up’, and to the yogic eye, the unmanifested divine energy has a form like that of a coiled serpent. One of the purposes of *sādhana* is the

awakening of this power. There are six *chakras* (subtle centres) in the body, often depicted as lotuses, with a seventh, the *sahasrāra* ('thousand-rayed'), located above these. Through various yogic exercises, the *kuṇḍalinī* is made to rise through the centres until it reaches the seventh.

In the second form of initiation, *mantra-dīkshā*, a *mantra* (a sacred word or formula) is given for repetition, along with various other instructions. The meaning underlying the *mantras* is explained in detail in the tantric texts, founded upon the principle that words and thoughts are inseparable, and that a person can change his character by meditation with the help of a word. The *mantra* is at the root of initiation and meditation. "*Mantras* are sacred," explains Radhakrishnan, "and are regarded as divine creations, in a sense identical with *Shakti*, who is *Shabda* or eternal Word."¹

The *tantras* describe four forms of worship and their relative merits:

The highest is realization of the Supreme; meditation (*dhyāna*) on the Supreme is in the middle; praise (*stuti*) and recitation of hymns is the lowest; and external worship (*pūjā*) is the lowest of all.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 14:122; cf. in *IP2* p.737, in *PU* p.141 (n.6)

Confirming this gradation is the protest against ritualistic religion contained in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*:

If men could attain liberation merely by rubbing themselves with mud and ashes, then surely all the village pigs who roll in it would have attained liberation? Denizens of the forest such as deer and other animals live only on grass, leaves, and water – have they thereby become *yogins*? Frogs and fish live all their lives in rivers like the Ganges – have they acquired special merit thereby?

Kulārṇava Tantra 1:80–82, *KTAA* p.139; cf. *KTAA* pp.24–25

The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* similarly maintains:

Liberation does not come from the recitation (*japa*),
fire ceremonies (*homa*) or a hundred fasts.
Man is liberated by the knowledge
that he himself is *Brahman*...

If by observance of a vow (*vrata*)
to live on air, water, leaves of trees, or pieces of grain,
liberation (*moksha*) could be attained,
then snakes, cattle, birds, and aquatic animals
would be liberated (*muktāḥ*).

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 14:115, 121, *GLMT* pp.440–41

Despite such observations, external symbols and rituals, often elaborate, are prescribed in detail and given considerable significance in many of the *tantras*. Their importance is stressed for those not advanced enough to undertake the higher forms of meditation. The *tantras* also teach the use of spells, charms, amulets, and *mudrās*. In ritualistic worship, an external symbol, such as an image, a picture, an emblem or a geometrical design called a *yantra* may be used. The ritualistic worshipper may also practise inward meditation; but the need for external symbols and rituals lessens as spiritual progress is made, and is altogether obviated when the stage of *brahmasadbhāva*, dwelling in *Brahman*, is reached.²

With the passage of time, the teachings of the *tantras* became misunderstood and distorted, coming to be regarded as a kind of black magic and erotic mysticism bound by a thread of ritualistic and ostentatious ceremony. This was the beginnings of *Vāmāchāra*, the left-hand path, with rituals that included wine, women, and various licentious practices. Originally employing these as symbols to teach freedom from the passions (by seeing the divine Mother in everything), this form of worship was, not unsurprisingly, overtaken by degeneration. Ritual and symbolism exact their toll. The higher wisdom of the *tantras* was generally forgotten, and even the inferior part of the teachings was misunderstood.³

The *tantras* have profoundly influenced Indian religious development, particularly *yoga*, but the misinterpretation of its rites by some of its own adherents has led to a misunderstanding of its essential character. There have been few greater advocates of the positive side of tantrism than Sir John Woodroffe (1865–1936), Chief Justice of the High Court of Calcutta, who spent a lifetime devoted to the study of tantric literature, translating texts that otherwise might never have appeared in English translation. He writes:

Tantra shāstra ... is generally spoken of as a jumble of ‘black magic’ and ‘erotic mysticism’, cemented together by a ritual which is ‘meaningless mummerly’. A large number of persons who talk in this strain have never had a *tantra* in their hands, and such orientalists as have read some portions of these scriptures have not generally understood them, otherwise they would not have found them to be so ‘meaningless’. They may be bad or they may be good, but they have a meaning. Men are not such fools as to believe for ages in what is meaningless.

John Woodroffe, Śakti and Śākta, SSEC p.58

In Jainism, there is no extensive tradition of tantrism involving the use of *mantras*, *yantras*, meditation and elaborate rites as seen in Hindu and Buddhist tantrism.⁴ But rituals with tantric or magical elements such as *mantras* and *yantras* have been and still are commonly used in Jain ritual. The *Tīrthankaras*, the Jain exemplars and forefathers, are understood to be beyond all interest in anything except their self-absorbed state of omniscience

and enlightenment, but a range of lesser, non-liberated deities are invoked in tantric-like rituals for their presumed power to intervene in human affairs. Among these are the *Mahāvidyās*, sixteen tantric deities also known as *vidyādevīs*, whose origins date back to the early centuries CE.

In medieval times, influenced by the concurrent growth of Hindu and Buddhist tantrism, a number of Jain tantric texts were written, and cultic worship and invocation through tantric ritual of various goddesses such as *Jvālāmālīnī*, *Padmāvatī* and a tantric form of the Hindu goddess *Sarasvatī* became popular within the Jain tradition. The intention was generally the fulfilment of various worldly desires, including the curing of disease, protection from harm, and the attainment of special powers. Many of these rituals were performed by sedentary Jain monks known as *yatis* who had abandoned the itinerant lifestyle and earned a living in monasteries and temple complexes, occupied with various duties including the performance of temple rituals with tantric elements. A more specific influence of tantric meditational practices in Jainism is found in Hemachandra's well-known twelfth-century *Yoga Shāstra*. The *Yoga Shāstra* describes the practice of *prāṇāyāma* and the use of *bīja-mantras* and *yantras*, not only as a means of controlling the *prāṇa* that flows in the bodily *chakras*, *nāḍīs* and so forth, but also for divinatory purposes such as foretelling the time of a person's death.

See also: **dīkshā** (7.4), **mantra**, **Vajrayāna** (►4), **yantra** (8.4), **yati** (7.1).

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, IP2 p.737.
2. Swami Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage of India*, SHI pp.148–49.
3. Material based largely on Swami Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage of India*; S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, IP1–2; and *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, EREH.
4. See “tantra,” *passim*, *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

taṣawwur (A), **taṣavvur** (P) *Lit.* perception, apprehension, conception, thought, awareness, understanding, discernment, observation; mystically, contemplation, vision; the holding of an imagined form in the mind's eye as a part of a meditational practice, as in *shaghl-i taṣavvur-i shaykh* (practice of contemplation on the form of the master).

See also: **shughl**, **tafakkur** (8.1).

tezi (Lakota) *Lit.* stomach or womb; metaphorically the ground on which a Native North American sweat lodge is located; regarded as the opening to Grandmother Earth and all her mysteries. See **sweat lodge**.

theōria (Gk) *Lit.* sight, vision; also, speculation; pilgrimage; mystically, contemplation of the Divine; in the mysticism of Plato and Plotinus, the culmination of the purificatory process and training of dialectic; an interior pilgrimage of experiencing the inner sacred sights and sounds; attaining spiritual vision (*thea*) of the mystical truth; contrasted, in the understanding of the Greek-speaking fathers of the early Church and later of the Orthodox Church, with *praktikē* or *praxis* (the active life), being the practice of good works, the virtuous life, and the pursuit of perfection. Among the ancient Greeks, the contemplative life (*bios theōrētikos*) was contrasted with the active life (*bios praktikos*), which implied a busy worldly life. Other Greek terms also used for contemplation include those derived from the verb *skopein* (to look at, to contemplate), such as *skepsis* (reflection, contemplation).

The way in which contemplation is understood is influenced to some extent by accompanying notions concerning the nature of the soul or spirit. Plato, Plotinus and those very early Christians such as Origen who followed the Platonist tradition, believed in the pre-existence of the soul prior to its human existence. The soul was understood to be essentially divine, to possess kinship with God, to be a part of His being, and to have the potential to return to or be reunited with Him. In this scenario, *theōria* or contemplation of the Divine – understood as the highest Being, the supreme Beauty, Truth, the One, the Good – is the practical means by which the soul can rediscover its own innate divinity.

With the development and ‘standardization’ of Christian doctrine in the fourth century, ‘orthodox’ Christianity increasingly rejected the concept of a soul that had once existed with God, opting instead for belief in souls that are created out of nothing, and individually infused into the embryo at the time of conception. According to this doctrine, there is an unsurpassable gulf between the uncreated and self-subsistent God and all created things, which have been created out of nothing by the divine will. There is nothing intermediate between the uncreated God and His creation. There is no emanative process by which the divine Word continuously forms and sustains creation. The only mediator between God and human beings is Christ.

Though in most cases the theology makes little difference to individual spiritual practice, it makes considerable difference to the way in which spiritual or mystic experience is interpreted. Union with God, understood as the complete merging of immortal essence with immortal Essence, is not acceptable to Christian doctrine. In the union with God described by Christian mystics, the soul is nonetheless believed to remain eternally other than Him.

The first extant appearance of *theōria* is in early Greek literature. The original meaning of the word was a matter of debate early on – some wanted to associate it with *theos* (god), others with *thea* (spectacle, sight, vision, contemplation). The two notions, however became intertwined, conveying the idea of ‘sacred spectating’ or ‘gazing at the Divine’.¹

Theōria became known as the philosopher's most characteristic occupation. It was sometimes portrayed through imagery associated with the three kinds of spectator who attended festivals, an imagery related by several authors in regard to Pythagoras:

It is also said that Pythagoras was the first to call himself a philosopher. This was not a new name, but he was the first to give practical instruction in a manner appropriate to the name. He described the entrance of human beings into life as like a crowd meeting at festal assemblies. There, all kinds of human beings gather together, each with a different purpose in view: one hastening to sell his wares for the sake of money and gain; another that he may gain renown by exhibiting his bodily strength; but there is also a third group of people, the most free, who come to take in the sights, to see the beautiful creations of craftsmen, and to hear fine speeches and see literary works, which are usually exhibited on such occasions.

So also in life, all kinds of men gather together in the same place to pursue their several interests: some are seized by a longing for riches and luxury; others by desire for power and public office, and an eagerness for rivalry; others are possessed by an insane ambition for fame. But the purest way of life for a human being is that which embraces the contemplation of the most beautiful things, and it is he that it is proper to call a philosopher.

Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 12:58; cf. ILP p.28

In the same vein, Plato identifies the life of *theōria* as the most worthwhile way to spend a human life. Speaking of a life dedicated to divine Love and Beauty – terms used more or less synonymously with the Good or the absolute Truth – Diotima, wise woman of Mantinea, tells Socratēs:

A life such as this, my dear Socratēs, passed in contemplating (*theōmenos*) Beauty absolute, is the life for man to live.

Plato, Symposium 211d; cf. DP1 p.543

Being absorbed in *theōria* is the philosopher's way of life. He is not concerned with politics and gaining reputation, for, "It is only his body that has its place and home in the city."² Though Plato and other classical philosophers discharged their civic duties, even making considerable contributions to the lives of their fellow citizens, nonetheless, *theōria* and the practice of withdrawal from "things petty and of no account",³ remained central to the life of the contemplative philosopher.

In the well-known allegorical myth related in *Phaedrus*, where the soul is depicted as a "winged charioteer", Plato describes the ultimate aspiration of the

soul as the “vision of Truth”, the “beatific Vision”, and by several similar terms.⁴ The means by which this vision of the Divine is realized is “contemplation”:

Every soul that is destined to assimilate its proper food is satisfied at last with the vision of Reality (*idein to On*), and nourished and made happy by contemplation (*theōrein*) upon Truth.

Plato, Phaedrus 247d; cf. PPL pp.52–53

In the *Republic*, where Plato depicts the wise “philosopher” (*i.e.* mystic) as the most appropriate person to be in charge of a city-state, he again speaks of the soul’s quest for “Absolute Unity,” which “has the power of drawing and converting the mind to the contemplation (*thea*) of true Being (*to On*).”⁵ And in the allegory of the cave, where heavily chained “prisoners” (human beings in this world) mistake shadows cast upon a wall for reality, not realizing that there is a light behind that casts the shadows, Plato likens the “release of the prisoners from chains, and their translation from the shadows . . . to the light” to the “power of elevating the highest Principle in the soul to the contemplation (*thea*) of That (*i.e.* the Good, the Divine) which is best in existence”.⁶

The true philosopher, for Plato, is in love with the vision or spectacle of Truth, which engages the faculties of both seeing and hearing:

GLAUCŌN: Are we to compare the lovers of spectacles (*philotheamones*) and those who love new things to philosophers (*philosophos*)?

SOCRATĒS: Not at all, but they do bear a certain likeness to philosophers.

GLAUCŌN: Whom do you mean then by the true philosophers?

SOCRATĒS: Those for whom the truth is the spectacle (*thea*) of which they are enamoured.

Plato, Republic 5:475d–e; cf. RBS1 pp.516–17

Plato’s well-known theory of forms (patterns or ideas) also had a visual basis. The Greek *idea* (form, pattern) comes from *idein* (to see). For him, “Anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight (*idein*) of this (Idea of the Good).”⁷ In the *Timaeus*, he depicts the cosmos as originating from the primal act of the Creator’s (Demiurge’s) gaze:

Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Constructor good, it is plain that He fixed His gaze (*eblepen*) on the Eternal; but if otherwise (which is an impious supposition), His gaze was on that which has come into existence. But it is clear to everyone that His gaze was on the Eternal; for the Cosmos is the fairest of all that has come into existence, and He the best of all the Causes. So having in this wise come into existence, it has been constructed after the pattern of that which is apprehensible by reason (*logos*) and thought (*phronēsis*).

Timaeus 29a, PTCC pp.50–53

Here, Plato chooses to use visual imagery for both the creative act and the contemplative experience of the Divine. It was also through Plato that *theōria* (vision, contemplation) acquired such a central place in the practice of philosophy.

Philosophy was generally deemed to fall into three categories: natural philosophy or physics, which was the study of material phenomena; moral, practical or active philosophy, which was the spiritual path of virtue and purity as lived in daily life; and contemplative philosophy, which implied daily spiritual practice or contemplation of a non-cogitative kind. Plato speaks of philosophy in all three senses, but he never forgets that the highest forms are its moral and contemplative aspects. The fifth-century (CE) Pythagorean, Hieroclēs, differentiates between these outer and inner aspects of the spiritual path:

Practical philosophy makes a man good by the acquisition of virtues. . . . Contemplative philosophy (*theōrētikē*) makes him like God by the irradiation of understanding and of Truth. . . . Now the sublimest pitch of all philosophy is the contemplative mind (*nous theōrētikos*).

Hieroclēs, On the Golden Verses of Pythagoras 45–48, 67–69, HVP pp.90, 128

Even Aristotle, a student of Plato and often portrayed as the father of modern science, regards the contemplative life and the pursuit of virtue as the highest form of human activity. It is contemplation, he maintains, that leads to the greatest happiness:

The happy man will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by preference to everything else, he will be engaged in virtuous action and contemplation (*theōreō*).

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1:10; cf. NEA pp.20–21

So significant does Aristotle consider the subject that he devotes the last book of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to happiness, and an entire section of it to happiness as the outcome of a contemplative life. The most self-sufficient of all people, he observes, is the philosopher, the seeker of philosophic (*i.e.* mystic) wisdom, for contemplation is an entirely personal activity, self-fulfilling, and an end in itself:

The philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate (*theōrein*) Truth, and the better he can do so, the wiser he is. He can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from contemplation (*theōrein*) itself, while from practical activities something is acquired in addition to the action.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 10:7; cf. NEA p.264

He reasons further that since the gods must be devoid of all human activity, they must have nothing left to do except contemplation. And since the gods are known to be supremely happy, that happiness must arise from contemplation. Therefore, a human being who engages in contemplation will find the greatest happiness:

If you take action away from a living being . . . what is left but contemplation (*theōria*)? Therefore, the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplation (*theōrētikē*); and among human activities, that which is most akin to this (contemplation) will be the greatest source of happiness.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 10:8; cf. NEA p.268

In fact, he maintains that happiness is actually a “form of contemplation”:

Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation (*theōria*) does, and those to whom contemplation (*theōrein*) more fully belongs are more truly happy, not as an accidental concomitant of contemplation but as inherent in it; for contemplation in itself is precious. Happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation (*theōria*).

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 10:8; cf. ANER pp.624–25, NEA p.268

The exercise of the contemplative faculty, he continues, makes a man “beloved of the gods”:

It seems likely that he who exercises and cultivates his soul (*nous*) seems to be both in the best disposition, and is also the most beloved of the gods. For if, as is generally believed, the gods do care for human affairs, then it would be reasonable to presume that they delight in that part of a human being which is best and most akin to themselves, namely the pure essence of the soul (*nous*). And that they will reward those who love and honour that part the most, because the gods care for their friends and for those who act rightly and nobly. Now it is perfectly clear that all these qualities belong most of all to the wise man. He is, therefore, most beloved of the gods. Likewise, the same is also the happiest.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 10:8; cf. ANER pp.626–27, NEA p.269

Such a life – a life of contemplation – he maintains, is divine, higher than that of normal human existence:

A life such as this, however, will be higher than the human level: for it is not insofar as he is human that he will live so, but insofar as

something divine is present in him. . . . So if the pure soul (*nous*) is divine, then . . . the life according to it is divine. . . . Therefore we should not follow those who advise us, being men, to have human thoughts, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us. . . . For man, therefore, the life lived in harmony with the pure soul (*nous*) is best and pleasantest, for the pure soul (*nous*), more than anything else, is man. Such a life therefore is also the happiest.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10:7; cf. ANER pp.616–17, NEA pp.265–66

It is worth noting that the term *nous* is generally translated by scholars as ‘reason’ or ‘intellect’, and contemplation (*theōria*) is often understood as reasoning. Such translations lead to a number of difficulties, however, not the least of which is that it implies that Aristotle envisaged intellectual reason to be divine, that he believed reasoning to be the happiest activity in which a human being can engage, and that he understood the gods to pass their time in reasoning. Clearly, this makes little sense, nor does it do credit to Aristotle’s acknowledged intelligence.

A number of scholars have indeed commented on the difficulty of translating *nous*. Among the Greeks, as well as the Greek-speaking Christians, the *nous* is the divine and eternal part of a human being that makes him different from other creatures. This may include the capacity for reason, discrimination and conceptualizing, but it is clearly something more than purely rational thought.

It is for this reason that Aristotle talks about two types of *nous*: the divine soul (*nous poiētikos*) and the reasoning faculty used to grasp complex concepts (*nous pathētikos*). *Nous poiētikos*, a specific Aristotelian term for the human capacity to become one with the Divine, is also called the Active Intellect (L. *Intellectus Agens*) or Active Intelligence, and was consistently identified with God because it bears all the qualities of the Divine. It is pure Soul (or Spirit) with no physical organ in the human body corresponding to it. This higher form of *nous* does not admit illusion because it has nothing to do with the production of ordinary thoughts, which involve only the concept-based intellect (*nous pathētikos*) together with the lower faculties such as *phantasia* (imagination), the senses, and so on.⁸

This undescended and pure form of *nous*, which is engaged in perpetual contemplation whether or not the individual soul is aware of it, became a core tenet of Plotinus’ philosophy. Because *nous* simultaneously meant God (the Creator) and the divine understanding residing within a human being, later Christian theologians ceased using it or neglected its higher meaning, because it encapsulates a meaning which contradicts the belief that created beings (*i.e.* souls) remain eternally other than the Divine.⁹

Logos in its transcendental sense has thus become the better-known term for the divine power, partly because of its use in the gospel of John, and

partly because it lacks uncomfortable overtones that conflict with Christian doctrine. Even so, leaving aside its more deeply mystical overtones, *nous* was still used for the spiritual element within a human being or at least for the mind's understanding of that spiritual aspect. St Paul, writing in the second half of the first century CE, uses *nous* throughout his letters to mean the reasoning mind; but he also regards it as that faculty of the mind which can grasp, understand, and convey to others the *pneuma* (Spirit) of God.¹⁰

Much of the confusion lies in the attempt to seek exact and consistent parallels between Greek terms for mind, reason, intellect, soul, spirit, and modern uses of these terms in English. In a Christian context, for instance, *nous* can be translated as 'spirit' or 'pure soul', but because 'spirit' is perceived to possess Christian connotations, the word can feel uncomfortable to some scholars of the Greek classics. In Greek, *nous* also has other connotations, which make it impossible to translate with a single English word. In particular, it is etymologically related to terms such as *noēsis* (knowledge, understanding, awareness) and *gnōsis* (knowledge, especially mystical knowledge), which gives *nous* overtones of 'understanding', 'perception', 'insight', and 'mystical knowledge'. The English words 'know' and 'noetic' both stem from the same root and are, incidentally, cognate with the Sanskrit *jñāna* (knowledge). But whatever terms are used to translate *nous*, it is clear that there will always be some who – depending upon their perspective and orientation regarding spirituality – will remain unsatisfied. When it comes to things mystical, words always prove inadequate.

The terms *theōria* and *nous* are again encountered many centuries later in the writings of Plotinus (c.205–270 CE) and the Neoplatonists. According to Iamblichus (d.c.330 CE), the early Greek mystic Pythagoras (b.c.580 BCE) taught his disciples "intense and unremitting pursuit and practice of the most subtle objects of contemplation (*theōrēma*)".¹¹ For Plotinus, it is by contemplation (*theōria* or *skopeō*) that the *nous* is able to comprehend the divine nature of life. In this context, Plotinus sometimes uses words derived from *skopein* (to contemplate something in particular) rather than *theōreō* (to contemplate something universal) when the object of contemplation is specifically identified:

To understand how life is imparted to the universe and to the separate beings in it, the soul (*psychē*) must rise to contemplation (*skopeō*) of the Great Soul (*megalē psychē*). The individual soul (*psychē*) is herself no small being; but she must become worthy of this contemplation (*skopein*), attaining a state of tranquillity, liberated from the errors and bewitchment to which other souls are bound.

Plotinus, Enneads 5:1.2; cf. PA5 pp.14–15, PEC p.208

How is it, he asks, that the soul does not maintain its vision of God? It is, he answers, because the soul is still bound to the world, the body, and the things of the senses:

Because it has not yet fully escaped; but there will come a time of unbroken contemplation (*thea*, vision) when the body will no longer present any obstacle.

Plotinus, Enneads 6:9.10; cf. PEC p.359, PPH p.71

The contemplator must learn to wait patiently in perfect stillness:

One must not chase after it, but wait quietly till it appears, preparing oneself to be its spectator (*theatēs*, contemplator), as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon . . . gives itself to the eyes to see.

Plotinus, Enneads 5:5.8; cf. PA5 pp.178–79, PEC p.232

For the majority, spiritual life consists of this struggle to break free from materiality, and to keep the mind always prepared for contemplation. As Pierre Hadot summarizes:

For Plotinus, the great problem is to learn how to live our day-to-day life. We must learn to live, after contemplation, in such a way that we are once again prepared for contemplation. We must concentrate ourselves within, gathering ourselves together to the point that we can always be ready to receive the divine presence, when it manifests itself again. We must detach ourselves from life down here to such an extent that contemplation can become a continuous state. Nevertheless, we still have to learn how to put up with day-to-day life; better still, we must learn to illuminate it with the clear light that comes from contemplation. For this, in turn, a lot of work is required; interior purification, simplification, and unification.

Pierre Hadot, Simplicity of Vision, PPH p.65

In his *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry describes his master's continual inner focus in such ceaseless contemplation:

He was wholly concerned with the *nous*. . . . Even if he was talking to someone, engaged in continuous conversation, he kept to his train of thought (*dianoia*). He could take his necessary part in the conversation to the full, and at the same time keep his mind fixed without a break on what he was considering. . . . In this way, he was present at once to himself and to others, and he never relaxed his self-turned attention except in sleep; even sleep he reduced by taking very little food, often not even a piece of bread, and by his continuous turning to his *nous*.

Porphyry, Life of Plotinus 8; cf. PA1 pp.28–31

Plotinus also suggests that in reality everything seeks to return to the One through some form of contemplation:

All things aspire to contemplation (*theōria*), directing their gaze to this end. . . . And all achieve their purpose so far as is possible to their nature, each contemplating and achieving its end in its own manner and degree, some having only an imitation and reflection of this true end.

Plotinus, Enneads 3:8.1; cf. PA3 pp.360–61, PEC p.129

According to Plotinus, one becomes a complete human being, becomes whole, when “the contemplator and the object of contemplation become one”, for “it is not a light by which he sees something else: the light is itself the vision (*opsis*)”.¹² This is the state of union, the ultimate goal of *theōria* and the life of contemplation:

(In this union), the soul is so disposed as even to dismiss intuitive knowledge (*noein*) – which at other times it welcomed – because even intuitive knowledge is a kind of movement and the soul does not wish to move; for it says that He whom it sees does not move either. Yet when this soul has become spirit (*nous*) – when it has been, so to speak, made *nous* and has come to dwell in the spiritual realm (*topos noētos*), then it contemplates (*theōrei*). When it has come to dwell in it, and moves about in it, it possesses intuitive knowledge; but when it sees God (*Theos*), it at once lets go of everything.

It is as if someone went into a richly decorated and beautiful house, and contemplated (*theōreō*) each and every one of the decorations therein, admiring them, before seeing the master of the house. But when he sees that master, who is not of the nature of the images (in the house), but worthy of genuine contemplation (*thea*), he dismisses those other things with delight, and thereafter looks at the master alone. Then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation (*theama*), he no longer sees a sight, but his seeing merges with the object of his contemplation (*theama*), so that what was once seen has now become his sight itself; and he forgets all other objects of contemplation (*theama*).

Plotinus, Enneads 6:7.34; cf. PA7 pp.194–95, PEC (35) pp.338–39

Terms derived from *theōreō* and *skopein* are again used in a spiritual context by the first-century, Greek-speaking Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus. Philo speaks of those who “engage in the contemplation (*skepsis*) of the Uncreated, like Abraham”.¹³ Giving a spiritual interpretation to the *Exodus* story, in which *manna* is given by God to the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness¹⁴, he writes:

God showers heavenly Wisdom (*Sophia*) from above upon those minds (*dianoia*) that are properly disposed to receive it and are fond of contemplation (*philotheamōn*); and they see it and taste it and are delighted with it.

Philo Judaeus, On Flight and Finding 25; cf. PCW5 pp.82–83, WPJ2 p.222

He also describes the soul that is drawn into contemplation of the Divine, seeking to escape from the body and its senses:

When the mind (*nous*), influenced by some philosophic principle (*theōrēma*), is drawn by It, it follows It, and automatically forgets all the other things concerning its corporeal abode. And if the senses are a hindrance to the clear vision of the spiritual goal (*thea tou noētou*), those who find happiness in contemplation (*thea*) take care to crush their attack. Shutting their eyes, stopping up their ears, and checking the impulses bred by their other senses, they choose to spend their time in solitude and darkness, so that no object of outward sense perception may dim the eye of the soul (*omma tēs psychēs*) to which God has given the power to see things spiritual. . . .

And when, having opened up the road that leads from self, in the hope of coming to discern the universal Father – so hard to understand by any guesses or conjectures – it will crown, maybe, the accurate self-knowledge it has gained with the knowledge of God Himself. No longer will it dwell . . . among the sense organs, but will withdraw into itself. For it is impossible that a mind whose tendencies still lie among the senses rather than the spirit (*noētos*) should arrive at proper contemplation (*episkeptō*) of Him that IS.

*Philo Judaeus, Migration of Abraham 34–35;
cf. PCW4 pp.242–43, 246–47, WPJ2 pp.85–87*

See also: **contemplation, contemplative life** (►4).

1. See A.W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth, STCG, passim*.
2. *Theaetetus* 173e, *PTSF* pp.120–21.
3. *Theaetetus* 173e, *PTSF* pp.120–21.
4. Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a ff.
5. Plato, *Republic* 7:524e–525a; cf. *DP2* p.388.
6. Plato, *Republic* 7:532b–c; cf. *DP2* p.397.
7. Plato, *Republic* 7:517c; cf. *RSB2* pp.130–31.
8. See V. Caston, “Aristotle’s Psychology,” in *CAPG* p.339.
9. See P.S. MacDonald, *History of the Concept of Mind, HCM1* p.101; Stephen Menn, *Plato on God as Nous, PGNM* p.xi.
10. *1 Corinthians* 14:1–19.

11. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 68–9, *IPWL* p.92.
12. Plotinus, *Enneads* 6:7.35; cf. *PA7* pp.198–201, *PEC* (36) p.339.
13. Philo Judaeus, *On Drunkenness* 23; cf. *PCW3* pp.366–67.
14. *Exodus* 16:4ff.

thod rgal (T) *Lit.* direct (*thod*) crossing (*rgal*); direct leap or jump; leaping over, crossing the crest; all-surpassing realization that happens in a sudden, spontaneous, or direct leap; phonetically rendered as *thödgäl*, *thögal*, and *tögal*; more generally, leaping at will from one level of meditation to a higher or from one stage of spiritual evolution to another, without needing to traverse the intermediate stages.

The intention of *thod rgal* is to bring about spontaneous realization of pristine awareness (*rig pa*) – the primordial, inherent *buddha*-nature of all sentient beings, that is regarded as the foundation of all mind, all consciousness, and all phenomena. *Thod rgal* is the second of the two main practices in the *Dzogchen* tradition of the Tibetan *Nyingma* school of Buddhism and the *Bönpo* tradition, the first being known as *khregs gcod* (breaking through resistance). Although the *Nyingma* and *Bönpo* teachings of *Dzogchen* are the same, they each have separate lineages of masters, which they trace back to at least the eighth century CE.

According to early *Dzogchen* teachings, spiritual practice entails effort, which results in delusion, since effort and the oneness of Reality do not co-exist. Early *Dzogchen* meditation practices therefore consisted of simply recognizing the pure, luminous (T. *'od gsal*, S. *prabhāsvara*) and empty (T. *stong pa*, S. *shūnyatā*) condition of one's own innate awareness. Later texts, however, influenced by Indian tantrism, introduced more specific meditation practices. These included meditation on light and darkness, as well as the more obviously tantric practices concerning the control of the body's subtle life energies (*prāṇa*). Among these various practices, *khregs gcod* belongs to the early strata of teachings known as the 'mind category (*sems sde*)'; *thod rgal* belongs to the later, tantric group of practices, known as the 'esoteric instruction category (*man ngag gi sde*, S. *upadesha*)', and has seemingly more 'method' about it.

A *thod rgal* practitioner (*thod rgal ba*) passes successively through four visions (*snang ba bzhi*) or stages in which all phenomena are progressively resolved into the primordial *maṇḍala* (source) of the pristine Essence, and all appearances created by the mind are dissolved; not even striving for pristine awareness remains. These four visions or stages are: the direct perception of the intrinsic nature of reality (*chos nyid mngon sum*); increase of meditative experiences (*nyams snang gong 'phel*); reaching perfection of awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs*); and the dissolving of phenomena and transcendence of mind (*chos zad blo 'das*). The practice makes use of various sources of light and darkness, such as sunlight, moonlight, candlelight, crystals, a darkened room

and so on, but the three principal methods involve gazing at sunlight (not directly), looking into the clear sky or empty space, and secluded contemplation on complete darkness. For safety reasons, however, detailed instructions and on-going guidance are received orally from a master.

These practices lead to visions of shapes, colours, trees, mountains, heavenly realms, deities (*yi dams*), demons, animals and other beings, as well as other experiences:

The *thod rgal* visions appear to manifest in the space before us, just as the cinema show does. When we do *thod rgal* practice, we gaze into the clear open sky and focus our gaze in this space without blinking. Then, at the horizon, or the tops of the trees, or on the side of the window frame; wherever we are gazing, we find that the space at this border becomes whiter and, at the centre of our vision, it grows darker. If we are gazing out through a window, for example, we find that the sky will be lighter and whiter next to the window frame and darker at the centre. As we continue to gaze, this light part around the border or at the edge becomes larger. However, the visions will only appear in the darker centre. This is the dimension in which the *thod rgal* visions manifest; and they will be like the cinema pictures projected onto the screen in front of us.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.202

Further details of the practice are provided by the *Nyingma* monk and scholar Dzogchen Ponlop (*b.* 1965):

There are *thod rgal* practices that work with different experiences and elements of light, such as sunlight, moonlight, basic daylight, and candlelight. *Thod rgal* practices are also often called ‘sky gazing’, as gazing into space is one characteristic of *thod rgal*. When we are ready to practise one of these methods, the extensive explanation is given to us by our personal teacher.

The *Dzogchen* practice of dark retreat requires a retreat dwelling specifically constructed for this purpose, which consists of a series of rooms, each progressively darker. The first room admits some light, the second is dimmer, and the most interior room is pitch dark. In this practice, we enter a state of complete darkness gradually, somewhat as we do when we are falling asleep; when we remain in that darkness, it is like the state of deep sleep. When we bring awareness to these states in which clarity is normally absent, we experience the clear, luminous nature of mind...

There is one *thod rgal* method that can be practised quite simply. The instructions say to sit up straight in the seven postures of Vairochana and to close your eyes as tightly as you can. Sometimes you may even

cover your eyes with the palms of your hands. Once your eyes are shielded from any external source of light, you simply look into the darkness with a relaxed mind. At first, there is just darkness, but if you keep looking, then various light forms begin to manifest. You may see blue, white, yellow, red, green, or even black *bindus* (points, spots). The key is to remain relaxed and to watch straightforwardly whatever appears in the space before you.

When there are many *bindus*, practise by alternating your focus: at one time, place your mind on the whole field of lights, and at another time, on a single *bindu*. When you focus on only one, place your mind clearly on that *bindu* and simply rest your mind there. . . . Do not allow your gaze or concentration to waver. Look at this sphere of light in the same way that you would stare at an ordinary object when your eyes are open. As you continue to look, the light becomes more vivid, clear, and sharp. Sometimes it changes its form, and sometimes it changes its size. It may become so radiant, so luminous, that the darkness is not dark anymore.

When you look at this experience, you can see that, yes, there are these lights. They are right before your eyes. However, you can also see that they do not in any way exist as solid objects outside of your mind. They arise from your own mind – from mind’s very nature. If you find that the *bindus* are becoming solid and real, then you are fixating on them and conceptualizing too much. You should cut through that tendency with the wisdom of *shūnyatā* (emptiness). Use the wisdom of emptiness to see the clarity-emptiness of these appearances, rather than making them into something solid like light bulbs.

Dzogchen Ponlop, Mind Beyond Death, MBDP pp.188–89

In all instances, the intention is for the visions to be seen not through the eye but in pure awareness (*rig pa*). Thus, although visions may have sunlight or total darkness or the empty sky as a secondary cause, the visions are actually experienced only in the mind; they arise from within the practitioner. The sunlight or sky are not the primary cause of the visions, but only serve as supports for the manifestation of the visions, much as a screen makes it possible to project a movie. The *thod rgal* visions are also described as natural and spontaneous, rather than the mental creations induced by means of imaginative visualization.¹ The successful practice of *thod rgal* requires development of pure awareness of one’s own being, a practice known as *khregs gcod*. The practice of *thod rgal* first requires a solid grounding in the practice of *khregs gcod*:

Visualization is a process which involves the working of the mind. However, with *khregs gcod* we have moved into a dimension beyond

the mind, and, with *thod rgal*, one continues in this direction. Rather than visualizations created by the mind, we are talking about an integration with vision, with whatever arises spontaneously to vision while the practitioner is in the state of contemplation. Therefore, the mastery of contemplation through the practice of *khregs gcod* is an immediate prerequisite to the practice of *thod rgal*; otherwise, there exists the danger of becoming caught up in one's visions, becoming distracted by them, and believing them to be an objective reality. Indeed, it was precisely this attachment to one's impure karmic visions that got the individual caught up in *samsāra* in the first place.

Patrul Rinpoche, Special Teaching, GLTS pp.33–34

“Impure karmic visions” are visions engendered by the influence of past *karma* on the mind. Vision of this world is also understood as karmic vision, since everything here happens as a result of *karma*.

As the practitioner progresses through the four stages, the visions become increasingly stable and coherent:

With the practice of *thod rgal*, our visions develop and gradually become more stable. At first we may see normal things like trees, mountains, and so on. Later we will most likely see letters, deities, and so on. At first these visions will not be stable, but will move about quite a bit. Moreover, we may only see parts of the deities, such as a face, or a torso. But with the third stage in the development of vision, we will see deities in *yab yum* and entire *maṇḍalas*, and all of this will be complete and perfect and bright. At the fourth stage, which is known as consummation (*zad pa*), all the visions dissolve and all that remains is the natural state. Since there are no more obscurations, there is nothing more to appear.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.197

Practitioners are advised to compare their visions with ordinary life. Just as *thod rgal* visions are recognized as unreal and insubstantial, so too are the things seen with so-called normal, everyday, physical vision, which arise as a result of past *karma*:

Through making this comparison of the *thod rgal* visions with normal vision, we gradually come to sense that the external world is equally unreal. Our ordinary life seems to have the same quality as the *thod rgal* visions, that is to say, as unreal and as insubstantial. This culminates with the third stage in the development of vision. The visions of the deities and *maṇḍalas* come to overlay and even replace our ordinary impure karmic vision. At the fourth stage, all of these visions

dissolve and go back to their source. They return to the natural state and there is nothing left except the natural state.

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.197

The stage of spiritual development reached also determines the onward destiny of the soul in the *bardo* (intermediate) state after death:

If we die at a time when we have realized the first stage, then in the *bardo* and in our next life we will meet the masters and the teachings again and again, and so continue to practise until we attain liberation. If we die at a time when we have realized the final stages, we will be reborn in a pure dimension (*i.e.* heavenly realm).

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings, BDTN p.197

See also: **khregs gcod**.

1. See Lopon Tenzin Namdak, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, BDTN pp.194–98, 239 (n.4).

tikkun ha-klali (He) *Lit.* the general (*ha-klali*) remedy (*tikkun*); the general restoration or rectification; an innovation of Rabbi Naḥman of Bratslav; specifically, recitation of ten biblical psalms in a particular order: 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, and 150. Rabbi Naḥman taught the need for this *tikkun* in 1806, but did not give the specifics until 1810. The recitation of these psalms was to be preceded by a short prayer asking forgiveness from the Lord.

Tikkun ha-klali was understood as a way of restoring the harmonious relationship with the Divine that had been ruptured, particularly due to sins of a sexual nature and especially by indulgence in sex for personal pleasure rather than for its ordained purpose of procreation and promoting harmony in marriage. On the individual moral level, it is considered that such sins represent a deep disobedience to the covenant with God as depicted in the Bible. This disobedience creates a deep rupture or alienation in an individual's relationship with the Divine. Wasting of semen through masturbation or nocturnal emission (the latter regarded in the *Torah* only as a cause of ritual impurity¹) was also regarded by Rabbi Naḥman as a sin in need of *tikkun ha-klali*. He considered such sins to be a misuse of a powerful divine force that, when used correctly, made man a partner with God in the creative process. According to his interpretation, this is why the covenant is marked with circumcision, which is understood as a way of circumscribing and purifying sexual activity and fulfilling the covenant with God.

Correcting sins of a sexual nature was a preoccupation of the kabbalists and *ḥasidim*. In Rabbi Naḥman's view, indulgence in these sins (as with other

serious sins) results in mental depression. He therefore advised recitation of these ten biblical psalms as the *tikkun ha-klali* for their rectification. He taught that daily recitation of these psalms would restore a sense of purity and joy to the mind and free one from the effects of the sin.

Rabbi Nahman also taught that the *tikkun ha-klali* has the power to rectify other spiritual and physical flaws or maladies:

There are places that are so fine and narrow that no remedy has the power to penetrate them except through the general remedy (*tikkun ha-klali*), which injects healing into even the narrowest, finest places. . . . First it is necessary to apply the general remedy (*tikkun ha-klali*), and through this all the individual flaws will automatically be rectified.

Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, Likkutei Moharan 29:4, 10, LMN1

See also: **tikkunim**.

1. *Leviticus* 15:16–24; *Deuteronomy* 23:10–12.

tikkunim (He) (sg. *tikkun*) *Lit.* rectifications, restorations; special prayers and meditative practices intended to bring about harmony in the creation and restoration (*tikkun*) of the soul to its original state of union with the divine Source or Godhead, known in kabbalistic vocabulary as the *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite).

Tikkunim practices are based on the premise taught in the thirteenth-century *Zohar*, and later by Rabbi Isaac Luria in the sixteenth century, that all souls (symbolized as sparks of light) had originally been one with the primal divine Light, but had become exiled through the ‘breaking of the vessels (*shevirat ha-kelim*)’ – a metaphor for descent of the primal light into the creation due to rupture of the unity of the soul and God. As a consequence, they had become attached to matter and imprisoned in the world.

It is also believed that *tikkunim* will restore the harmony of the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) that form creation in the four realms or worlds of *azilut* (emanation, the highest spiritual realm, closest to God), *briah* (creation, causal level), *yezirah* (formation, astral level), and *assiyah* (actualization, action, material level). *Tikkunim* are understood as a means of creating order out of disharmony, restoring the harmonious relationship among the *parzufim* (configurations of the *sefirot*) that was thrown into disharmony at the time of the ‘breaking of the vessels’. *Tikkunim* are Luria’s practical response to his own myth concerning the origin of the cosmos and his belief in the need for *tikkun*.

Tikkunim consist of special prayers and *kavanot* (intentions, focused concentration exercises). The performance of *tikkunim* persists in present times.

Books of *tikkunim* can be purchased for particular occasions, although it is considered best to receive them personally from a rabbi. There are special *tikkunim* for each day of the year, each activity of the day, and particularly for each religious festival. Not only are specific prayers involved, but the performance of each ritual and the observance of each commandment is understood to have a particular effect in the spiritual realms. Some *tikkunim* involve repetition of the letters of the 'divine Name'; some serve as penitence for specific sins, such as disobeying one's parents, evil thoughts, humiliating others, sexual transgressions, and so on. Also, *tikkunim* often include periods of fasting. Among the *ḥasidim*, the concept of *tikkunim* was broadened to include ethical and moral acts as well as prayers and rituals to correct the disharmony.

Ḥayyim Vital, a close disciple of Rabbi Isaac Luria, relates that his master gave his disciples individual *tikkunim* to mend their souls:

He gave him (each disciple) the *tikkun* he required for the corresponding transgression, in order to cleanse his soul, so that he could receive the divine light, as it is written, "(O Jerusalem,) wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be redeemed."¹

Ḥayyim Vital, Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh, SRKV, in PSHC p.326

Ḥayyim Vital's writings also explain the belief that the most mundane bodily actions can help to raise the sparks and restore the divine harmony. He describes how the daily routine of cleansing the physical body, as well as the rituals associated with the daily prayers as well as the prayers themselves, have particular roles to play in the overall *tikkun* of the realms of creation. These practices and daily routines were elevated to the level of spiritual acts and became part of the structured order of *tikkunim*, in which mental intention was also of importance:

This is the meaning of prayer and its mystery. Man must rise up early in the morning, relieve himself, and wash his hands. He must put right the four worlds by means of his deeds and his words. He performs the *tikkun* by deed when he relieves himself. The act corresponds to the world of action (*ʿassiyah*), so when he evacuates his bowels he should have the intention (*kavanah*) of cleansing the world of action from the *kelipot* ('shells', evil demonic powers), namely, the *ʿassiyah* of *ʿassiyah*. After this he should have the intention of putting right the *ʿassiyah* of *yezirah*. This is achieved when he puts on the small garment with the fringes attached (*zizit*). . . . After this, when he puts on the *tefillin* (phylacteries), he should have the intention of putting right the *ʿassiyah* of *aẓilut*. . . . And then, when he dons the large *tallit* (prayer shawl) and wraps himself around with it, there is the overall and surrounding *tikkun*.

Thus far the *tikkun* performed by deed. And now the *tikkun* performed by word of mouth. When he recites the order of the sacrifices (quoted from the Bible, as part of his daily prayers), there is achieved the *tikkun* of *yezirah* of 'assiyah. When he recites the songs of praise (as in psalms), there is achieved the *tikkun* of *yezirah* of *yezirah*. This is followed by *kaddish*, *barekhu*, and the *shema* (certain key prayers of the morning liturgy). These correspond to the *briah* of *briah*; and when the *shema* (prayer) is recited, there should be the intention of performing the complete unification (*yihud*).

Hayyim Vital, Peri 'Ez Hayyim 4, Sha'ar ha-Tefillah, PEHV, in USJM pp.111–12

The practice of keeping one's mind in the divine presence while performing even the most mundane of acts is a spiritual principle shared by mystics universally. The Jewish mystics who taught *tikkunim* understood that there was a spiritual knowledge and power to be gained by repetition and concentration exercises that are intended to bring the Divine into every aspect of everyday life.

Although the concept of *tikkun* is mainly associated with Rabbi Isaac Luria, it was other members of his circle who enacted the first documented *tikkun*. On the evening of the festival of *Shavu'ot* ('Feast of Weeks') in the year 1533, Rabbi Joseph Karo, the poet Solomon Alkabez and their companions among the mystics of Safed in northern Israel held an all-night vigil to celebrate the revelation of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai. During the ritual, the *Shekhinah* appeared to them in the form of a *maggid* (angel). This event is regarded as the first *tikkun*. Even in present times, Jewish devotees worldwide assemble on the eve of *Shavu'ot* to re-enact the vigil in an all-night study of the scriptures.

See also: **shevirat ha-kelim** (5.2), **tikkun ha-klali**.

1. *Jeremiah* 4:14.

time for prayer, time of prayer Most spiritual and religious people begin their day with a period of prayer. This helps to set the mood and trend of mind for the whole day. Monastic communities, of course, have set times for prayer interspersed throughout the twenty-four hours. Writing for laypeople about meditation (understood here as reflection upon some passage from the Bible or some other spiritual matter), François de Sales advises them to practise it in the morning, "as being the most suitable time for spiritual exercises, and then turn the matter over in your mind during the rest of the day".¹ More extensively, he counsels:

Spend an hour every day, some time before the midday meal, in meditation, and the earlier the better, because your mind will then be less distracted, and fresh after a night's sleep; but do not spend more than

an hour unless your spiritual director expressly tells you to do so. If possible, it is best to make your meditation in church, because neither your family nor anyone else is likely to prevent you from staying there for an hour, whereas if you are dependent on others you might not be able to promise yourself an uninterrupted hour at home.

Always begin your prayers, mental or vocal, by placing yourself in the presence of God; you will soon see how helpful this is. I would advise you to say the *Pater*, *Ave* and *Credo* in Latin, while of course taking care to understand what you are saying in your own language so that while using the language of the Church you may lose nothing of the sacred meaning of these wonderful prayers. Be very careful to attend to what you are saying and conform your heart to the sentiments expressed. Do not try to say too many prayers, but say with sincerity those that you do say; one *Pater* said devoutly being of greater value than many said hastily.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:1, IDL p.52

As many contemplatives have said, keeping focused on the Divine throughout the remaining hours of the day helps concentration at the time of prayer. To achieve this, John Klimakos recommends continuous repetition of the Jesus prayer (“unceasing prayer”):

Get ready for your set time of prayer by unceasing prayer in your soul. In this way, you will soon make progress.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28, LDAC p.278

Brother Lawrence advises holding the mind in awareness of the divine presence:

One way to re-collect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquillity, is not to let it wander too far at other times: you should keep it strictly in the presence of God; and being accustomed to think of Him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm in the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Letters 8, PPGL p.23

He had so perfected this attitude of mind that he confessed:

The time of business . . . does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.

Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God, Conversations 4, PPGL p.46

Naturally, this means keeping the mind free of all negative thinking before the time of prayer:

Guard yourself from hatred and dissipation, and you will not be impeded at the time of prayer.

Thalassios the Libyan, On Love 1:15, Philokalia, PCT2 p.308

And at the time of prayer itself, all extraneous thoughts should be eliminated:

Someone who is occupied with some task and continues with it at the hour of prayer is being fooled by the demons, for these thieves aim to steal one hour after another from us.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28, LDAC p.278

The hour of prayer is no time for thinking over necessities, nor even spiritual tasks, because you may lose the “better part”.²

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28, LDAC p.281

Experience has proved that in the hour of prayer one must not linger even on an apparently good thought, for it is sure to bring with it other intrusive thoughts, so that ... the mind will not emerge pure. And nothing can make up for the loss of pure prayer.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.77

At the time of prayer, we should expel from our heart the provocation of each evil thought, rebutting it in a spirit of devotion so that we do not prove to be speaking to God with our lips, while pondering wicked thoughts in our heart.

Isaiah the Solitary, On Guarding the Spirit 26, Philokalia, PCT1 p.27

Yet all this is far easier said than done, as Teresa of Ávila – who later had many ecstatic experiences in contemplative prayer – admits to the struggles of her earlier years:

Very often, over a period of several years, I was more occupied in wishing my hour of prayer were over, and in listening whenever the clock struck, than in thinking of things that were good. Again and again, I would rather have done any severe penance that might have been given me than practise recollection as preliminary to prayer. ... Whenever I entered the oratory, I used to feel so depressed that I had to summon up all my courage to make myself pray at all. ... In the end, the Lord would come to my help. Afterwards, when I had forced myself to pray, I would find that I had more tranquillity and

happiness than at certain other times when I had prayed because I had wanted to.

Teresa of Ávila, Life 8, CWTA1 p.51

See also: **dawn**.

1. François de Sales, *Devout Life* 1:8, IDL p.23.
2. *Luke* 10:42.

trāṭaka-karma, trāṭaka-kriyā (S/H) *Lit.* fixing (*trāṭaka*) practice (*karma, kriyā*); one of the six preparatory practices of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

tǔfǔ (C) *Lit.* earthen (*tǔ*) cauldron (*fǔ*), a large pot. See **fǔ**.

tuóyuè (C) *Lit.* bellows; a *yuè* is a blow tube, while a *tuó* is a tube or bag, and the two words as a compound refer to a bellows; also used for the more sophisticated Chinese box bellows, which consists of a long wooden box, with two pairs of simple flap valves and a hand-operated piston, drawing in air behind itself and expelling it ahead as it moves, producing a constant airflow that increases the temperature in the furnace.

In Daoism, a range of symbolism is associated with the *tuóyuè*. It is used to signify the interaction between *yīn* and *yáng*, male and female, heaven and earth, which brings the creation into existence. As a blow tube, *yuè* is a name for an ancient flute, and for this reason *tuóyuè* is also a name for a musical instrument, since a flute produces music when air is made to vibrate within its emptiness or hollowness. Wáng Bì (C3rd CE), an early commentator on the *Dàodé jīng*, suggests that emptiness provides the explanation for the inexhaustible creativity of the *Dào*.¹ Heaven and earth (*i.e.* creation) are also represented as a ‘furnace’ by which all things are created, destroyed, reabsorbed, remoulded, and reproduced in the endless cycle of creativity.

The *tuóyuè* also signifies the effort that practitioners put into their spiritual pursuits – operating the bellows in a forge is hard and repetitive work, requiring perseverance.

Behind the image of the bellows lies China’s long and impressive history in the art of metallurgy. The beauty of the bronzeware produced during the *Shāng* dynasty (1600–1050 BCE) is still unmatched.²

The earliest written mention of *tuóyuè* is found in the *Dàodé jīng*, where it symbolizes the inexhaustible creativity of the *Dào*:

(The space) between heaven and earth –
how like a bellows (*tuóyuè*) it is!

Though empty, its supply never diminishes –
the more it moves, the more it pours out.

Dàodé jīng 5

In his treatise *Veritable Truth*, master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) comments on the image of the bellows. First, he makes reference to the use of the term in the *Dàodé jīng*:

The *Dàodé jīng* introduces the bellows (*tuóyuè*) only as a metaphor for the subtle function of the emptiness (*xū*) in the centre (*zhōng*). The later notion of it, signifying the mechanism by which the two energies rise and fall, is also good.

Yáng Dàoshēng, *Zhēnquán*, JY244, ZW373

He quotes also from a Sòng dynasty (960–1279) text entitled *On Ascending and Descending Yīn and Yáng in Ten Books on the Cultivation of Perfection*. Master Yáng Dàoshēng explains that the action of inhaling and exhaling corresponds to the ascending and descending of *yīn* and *yáng*:

The rising and falling function of heaven and earth (creation) is like the function of a bellows (*tuóyuè*). If you can emulate it, opening to let energy out (like the energy of earth rising), and closing to let energy in (like the energy of heaven falling) – each taking its turn to rise and fall – then, automatically, you will be in continuous harmony with heaven and earth.

Yīnyáng shēngjiàng lùn, in *Zhēnquán*, JY244, ZW373

Master Yáng Dàoshēng also elucidates a metaphorical use of *tuóyuè* in some *nèidān* (inner alchemy) texts, where it refers to the meditative exercise of *zhēnxī* (true breathing), *i.e.* of breathing *yuánqì* (primordial Energy) to nourish *zhèngqì* (righteous *qì*, positive or spiritual energy). The truer the breathing, the more original *qì* is absorbed, which develops *zhēnqì* (true *qì*). Although meditative practices may include breathing techniques, in this context ‘breath’ *qì* refers to its absorption into body, mind, and spirit:

When Daoists today speak of pumping the bellows (*tuóyuè*), they do not actually mean pumping a bellows (*tuóyuè*). They mean harmonizing the true breathing (*zhēnxī*). If you know the furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*) but not the bellows (*tuóyuè*), then *yīn* and *yáng* are separated. Even though the furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*) have been built, they are of no use. If you know how to pump a bellows (*tuóyuè*) but do not know how to harmonize the true breathing, then you are missing the essential subtlety of pumping. How then can you utilize the positive energy (*zhèngqì*) of

heaven and earth (creation) to manifest the elixir (*dān*, i.e. original spiritual awareness)?

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) describes the *tuóyuè* in the context of spiritual practice (“cultivation of Truth”):

A bellows (*tuóyuè*) has openings at both ends. On each opening there is a flap. Its inside is empty, while its body is straight. Its inner emptiness is its essence; the straightness of its body is what permits it to function. The two openings are the passages for exit and entry (of air). The two flaps are the mechanism for opening and closing (the box). The body (of the bellows) is moved back and forth to draw in and push out. It does not bend when it is empty; it produces wind when moving. Its opening and closing, its in and out, occur naturally.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of essence and function in the cultivation of Truth (*xiūzhēn*). For human beings to be empty within is the essence. To be straightforward in mind is the function. If this is achieved, then there is no ego or desire, and the way of heaven flows and moves through them. Then their firmness and yielding are in proper balance; their action (*dòng*) and stillness (*jìng*) are fittingly combined; their directness and indirectness are balanced; their concealing and revealing are appropriate to the situation.

Then they participate and function in the same way as the *qì* (energy) of the Void, subject to the same creative and transformative (*zàohuà*) principles as heaven and earth. Just like a bellows (*tuóyuè*), which is empty within and straight in its body, they come and go, breathe in and out naturally, *qì* working unceasingly. How then could they not attain immortal life?

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

1. *Dàodé jīng* 4.
2. See Ellen Chen, *Tao Te Ching*, TTCC pp.67–68.

uḍḍiyāna-bandh(a) (S/H) *Lit.* flying up (*uḍḍiyāna*) contraction (*bandha*); one of the *bandhas* of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

upasamānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of peace (*upasama*); mindfulness of peace; recollection of the qualities associated with *nibbāna*, viz. the end of suffering, supreme bliss, freedom from transmigration and the aging, sickness and death that are inextricably associated with birth; the last of

the ten recollections (*anussati*) listed among the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) in the *Abhidhamma* (analytical systematization of the Pali *suttas*) and associated literature.¹

Although inner peace and tranquillity are frequently mentioned in the Pali *suttas* as essential aspects of Buddhist aspirations, *upasama* is only recommended in one place as a focus for meditation, along with many other subjects for recollection or mindfulness. According to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the result of all these practices of recollection or mindfulness is detachment, peace and mystical knowledge, leading to *nibbāna*.²

Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *nibbāna*. What is that one thing? Recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*). This is that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, ... to *nibbāna*.

Anguttara Nikāya 1:296, PTSA1 p.30, NDBB p.116

The practice of *upasamānussati* is further expounded in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. He begins with a standard formula with which he introduces all ten of the recollections or mindfulnesses:

He who wants to cultivate the recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*) ... should go into solitary retreat and recollect the special qualities of *nibbāna*, in other words, the stilling of all suffering.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:245, PTSV p.293; cf. PPVM p.286

In his elaboration, Buddhaghosa begins by quoting a passage from the *Anguttara Nikāya* that lists the characteristics of *nibbāna*. These are:

The disillusionment of pride (*mada*), the elimination of craving (*pipāsā*), the uprooting of attachment (*ālaya*), the termination of the round (*vaṭṭa*) of transmigration, the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), dispassion (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), *nibbāna*.

Anguttara Nikāya 4:34, Aggappasāda Sutta, PTSA2 p.34; cf. NDBB p.422, PPVM p.287

He then goes on to expound the detailed meaning of this passage, taking *nibbāna* to imply “peace (*upasama*)”, and concluding with, “This is how peace, in other words, *nibbāna*, should be recollected according to its special qualities, beginning with the disillusionment of pride.” Seeking other suitable material from the *suttas*, he adds, “But it should also be recollected according to the other special qualities of peace (*upasama*) stated by the Blessed One in the *suttas* beginning with”:

The Unformed, ... the Truth, ... the other shore, ... the subtle, ... the Undecaying, ... the Lasting, ... the Undiversified, ... the Deathless, ... the auspicious, ... the secure, ... the wonderful, ... the intact, ... the unafflicted, ... the purity, ... the island, ... the shelter.

Saṃyutta Nikāya 43:2–43, PTSS4 pp.360–72; cf. CDBB pp.1372–79, PPVM p.289

In the absence of any discussion in the *suttas* of *upasamānussati*, Buddhaghosa is seeking similar discussions on the matter.

He then concludes that meditation on peace frees the mind from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), leading to the appearance of the essential mental factors necessary for entry into the *jhānas* (the *jhānangas*), and thence to threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). But because the nature of the meditation involves thinking about the subject, concentration cannot go further and enter the fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) of the first *jhāna*. And he concludes with a statement similar to that with which he finishes a number of the other ten meditations:

A *bhikkhu* who is devoted to this recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*) sleeps in bliss and wakes in bliss, his faculties are peaceful, his mind is peaceful; he has conscience and shame, he is confident, he is resolved to attain the superior state, he is respected and honoured by his fellows in the life of purity. And even if he ascends no higher, he will at least be bound for a happy destination (after death).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 8:251, PTSV p.294; cf. PPVM p.289

See also: **anussati**.

1. E.g. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:105, 7:1, 8:245–51, PTSV pp.110, 197, 293–94.
2. See also *Anguttara Nikāya* 1:494, PTSAI p.42.

utpanna-krama (S) *Lit.* fulfilment (*utpanna*) stage (*krama*). See **nishpanna-krama**.

utpatti-krama (S), **bskyed rim** (T) *Lit.* generation (*utpatti*) stage (*krama*); the development or creation stage; the initial phase or process of spiritual transformation by means of meditative practices; the first of the two main categories of ‘skilful means (*upāya*)’ associated with *anuttara-yoga tantra*; emphasized especially in the group of tantric texts known as the ‘father *tantras*’, as epitomized by the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*; also identified with the *mahāyoga* (great *yoga*) of the *Nyingma* school.

The many spiritual practices described in the *anuttara-yoga tantras* are often classified as belonging either to the generation or initial stage

(*utpatti-krama*) or to the fulfilment or completion stage (*nishpanna-krama*). A smaller group of *anuttara-yoga tantras*, such as the *Kālachakra Tantra*, advocate a combination of the two methods, and are hence known as the non-dual *tantras*. The numerous tantric texts, however, exhibit many differences in doctrine and practice, and there have been various attempts to classify them.

Utpatti-krama refers to a category of meditative practices in which the practitioner consciously visualizes, imagines or mentally fabricates one of the celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* or other tutelary deities (*yi dam*), either in front of himself (front generation) or as himself (self generation). It is because the meditator himself generates the images in his own mind that these initial exercises are classed as *utpatti-krama*. *Utpatti-krama* involves the initial establishing and maintenance of the visualization of a deity. Front generation can also include visualization of the deity above one's head or in one's heart *chakra*. Whether an individual practises front or self generation depends upon the particular initiation and instructions received. The intention is normally to progress from front generation to self generation, although front generation is generally regarded as less risky than self generation, since the latter may result in the acquisition and allurements of supernatural powers (*siddhis*), which can lead a practitioner astray. A visualized image of the *yi dam* is known as a *samaya-sattva* (pledge being, imagined being).

There are many variations on the central idea, but generally, along with other aspects of tantric practice, the deity is visualized as the central deity in a *maṇḍala*. The practitioner may also visualize a 'refuge tree', a graphic representation of the lineage of *gurus* of his particular tradition. The intention may be to propitiate the celestial being chosen as the focus for the meditation, and to imbibe the qualities of that being. More specifically, the practices are intended to rid the meditator of habitual clinging to material and mental phenomena – to change his perception and experience of reality by imagining all forms, sounds and thoughts as being imbued with the nature of deities, *mantras*, and the highest wisdom. For instance, the practitioner might imagine the material world as the *maṇḍala* of the deity. All forms are then seen as being pervaded by the deity; all sounds are understood to be the *mantra* of the deity; and all thoughts are infused with the wisdom of the deity.

According to the *Kālachakra Tantra*, in the generation stage (*utpatti-krama*), the initiate first attempts to dissolve mundane perceptions of self and the world by concentrating upon their essential emptiness (*shūnyatā*) – upon their lack of any fundamental, absolute or autonomous existence or reality. Nothing is self-existent in its own right, least of all the initiate's own sense of a personal self. Having thereby loosened his connection with the illusory self and the world, he then imagines himself experiencing his own conception, gestation, and birth as a child of Buddha Kālachakra ('Wheel of Time') and his consort Vishvamātā ('Universal Mother'). He thus generates a vision of himself that is identified with these two *buddha*-deities. This initial practice

helps to spiritualize the mind, loosening attachment to the self and to the world. It is also believed to create a significant store of merit (*punya*).

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra**, **nishpanna-krama**, **samaya-sattva**.

vāmāchāra (S), **vām(a) mārg(a)** (S/H), **vām bhāg** (H), **bām bhāg**, **bām mārg** (H/Pu) *Lit.* left (*vāma*) side (*bhāga*) or path (*mārga*); left-hand practice (*vāmāchāra*); a tantric path involving practices contrary to traditional Hinduism, such as animal sacrifice, the consumption of meat, the use of alcohol and other drugs, and rituals that include sexual intercourse; the converse of *dakṣiṇāchāra* or *dām mārg*, which insist on mental and moral perfection. See **dakṣiṇāchāra**.

vasī (Pa) *Lit.* mastery, having power or control over; proficiency, the possession of skill in something, the ability to do something at will; in Buddhism, a general term used for mastery of one's actions, of one's senses, of one's thoughts, of the *jhānas* (stages of meditative absorption), of *samatha* (tranquillity), and so on; hence *vāsin* or *vāsī* (one who has mastery or power over something).

According to the *Abhidhamma* (analytical systematization of the Pali *suttas*) and allied literature, five kinds of mastery are associated with each of the *jhānas*. Essentially, they refer to a meditator's unhindered ability to focus upon, enter, remain in, emerge from, and review his experience of the *jhānas*. In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa explains them as

mastery of turning the attention (*āvajjana-vasī*), of entering (*samāpajjana-vasī*), of determining (*adhiṭṭhāna-vasī*), of emerging (*uṭṭhāna-vasī*), and of reviewing (*paccavekkhana-vasī*). He (the meditator) turns his attention to the first *jhāna* where, when and for as long as he wishes; he has no difficulty in turning his attention; this is mastery of turning his attention.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 23:27, PTSV p.704; cf. PPVM p.737

Likewise, for the other four *vasīs*. The meditator enters the first *jhāna*, determines the duration of his stay in, emerges from, and reviews the details of his experience in the first *jhāna*, “where, when, and for as long as he wishes; he has no difficulty.” The meditator then repeats the process of attaining the five masteries for each of the four lower *jhānas* of *rūpaloka* (world of forms, images, or archetypes) and the four higher *jhānas* of *arūpaloka* (formless world).¹ Basically, he learns to come and go from the *jhānas* as and when he pleases.

The Thai Buddhist monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993), who believed that an evolved spiritual perspective identifies itself with no particular religion, explains the five masteries in greater detail. He speaks specifically of

the *vasīs* in connection with mindfulness of the in-breaths and out-breaths (*ānāpānasati*) – a common Buddhist method of entering the *jhānas*. The details of five masteries are mostly discussed from the viewpoint of the first *jhāna*, and only at the end does he explain that a meditator goes through an analogous process when mastering the higher *jhāna*.² Summarizing Buddhadasa's description, the five *vasīs* are:

1. *Āvajjana-vasī*. Mastery of turning the attention (often translated as 'adverting the attention') to the *jhānas*; mastery of the ability to turn the attention to the *jhānas* at will; mastery of the various methods used for concentrating the mind in order to enter the first *jhāna*. These methods include fixing the mind on whatever objects (*kaṣiṇas*), topics or themes have been chosen for meditation; to bring together the five *jhāna* factors (*jhānangas*) and to induce the acquired (*uggaha*) and counterpart (*paṭibhāga*) images (*nimittas*) within that are required for entry into the first *jhāna*; concentration on the in- and out-breaths (*ānāpānasati*), and so on. By repeated practice and observation of the speed and ease with which the practices are accomplished, a practitioner is able to increase his mastery of the process. The intention is to be able to fix the mind instantly in any of these practices or exercises, and at the same time to increase the stability and firmness of the meditation. It is like someone who is learning to cook. At the outset, it takes him a long time to prepare all the ingredients; but with practice, he becomes more proficient because he has noted what ingredients are required and the correct quantities of each, and is therefore able to assemble them with increasing rapidity.
2. *Samāpajjana-vasī*. Mastery of entering *jhāna*; mastery of bringing together the five *jhānangas* required for entering the first *jhāna*, of inducing the appearance of the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) at will, and of entering the first *jhāna*. Here, using the analogy of the cook, having learnt to bring the ingredients together more rapidly, the cook is now becoming more proficient at cooking the dish.
3. *Adhiṭṭhana-vasī*. Mastery of determining the duration of stay in a particular *jhāna*; mastery of becoming established in that *jhāna* and of remaining there for as long as one wishes. To begin with, a practitioner may be unable to remain in a particular *jhāna* for very long, before the concentration wanes. Practice is required in order to become established in this state, and the practitioner gradually learns to prolong the period from minutes, to hours, to several days at a stretch. Some people are able to determine the duration of their sleep before they go to sleep. Similarly, before entering a particular *jhāna*, a practitioner should decide how long he intends to remain there – whether for a few minutes or considerably longer. He should then enter the *jhāna* and come out of it after the set duration. Mastery of

entering, remaining in and emerging from *jhāna* are the most difficult aspects of meditation. Once these have been accomplished, the ability to gauge the time passed in *jhāna* is automatically attained.

4. *Vutṭhāna-vasī* or *uṭṭhāna-vasī*. Mastery of emerging from *jhāna*; the converse of the second *vasī*. For one who is not practised in emerging from *jhāna* to normal waking consciousness, the process requires learning and will take longer. Training is required in order to emerge as rapidly as one enters. To begin with, the emerging follows the reverse of the entry. For emerging from the first *jhāna*, awareness is shifted slowly from the *jhāna* to the *jhāna* factors, and from thence to the *paṭibhāga nimitta*, to the *uggaha nimitta*, to the *parikamma nimitta* (preparatory image) associated with refined breathing, and finally back to normal breathing. With practice, emerging can be performed instantly, without consciously withdrawing through these stages.
5. *Paccavekkhana-vasī*. Mastery of reviewing *jhāna*; mastery of the ability to recapitulate the entire process of entering, remaining in and withdrawing from the *jhānas*, as described above, by objectively reviewing all the methods, mental faculties, *jhānangas*, and states of consciousness experienced. Buddhadasa explains:

This skill in reviewing must be developed if the meditator is to be proficient and quick in every aspect of the practice. He must review the whole process forwards and in reverse, which means recapitulating the entire course of the practice. The way to practise this mastery is as follows: after having emerged from *jhāna* the meditator must not immediately stand up, but must remain seated; he must not direct his mind to some other topic, but rather should reflect on the *jhāna*. He should review it from start to finish, that is, review thoroughly all the steps involved in entering and emerging by letting the mind ‘sweep back and forth’.

While reviewing the process of attainment of absorption, the meditator should review from the very beginning up to entry into *jhāna*, and the experiencing of the happiness of freedom from impurities that results from remaining in *jhāna*. Having done this for a sufficient length of time, he should likewise review the process of withdrawing from absorption right back to the stage of preliminary work (*parikamma bhāvanā*, preparatory exercises).

Reviewing in this way, he sees his *samādhi* from beginning to end, both ‘the forward trip and the return’, examining all the steps in detail and thereby gaining ever more understanding and skill for further practice. This practice has the additional good effect of arousing interest in the development of the bases for success (*iddhipāda*) and bringing about the maturing of the mental

faculties, making them ever stronger. Unless the meditator is proficient in this last mastery, he cannot truly acquire the preceding four kinds of mastery. Hence, this *vasī* of reviewing includes all the proficiencies involved in the other fields of mastery.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Ānāpānasati, AMBB pp.312–13

Buddhadasa then explains that the five masteries apply to each of the four lower and ultimately the four higher *jhānas*, and a meditator should learn to perfect each of the five masteries for each *jhāna*:

Anyone who has perfected these five kinds of practice is reckoned as having mastery of the first absorption (*jhāna*). His task is then to train further and gain mastery in the remaining absorptions – the second, third, and fourth. Once he has attained the second absorption, the meditator must train himself in all the five kinds of mastery just as he did in the case of the first; there is no difference except in level. Thus the meditator progresses through the four *jhānas*. However, in carrying out this training, the meditator must start each time from the very beginning of the first absorption. He has to be proficient in each and every phase of the whole course of practice right from beginning to end; he must not carelessly skip over the early stages and train himself only in the later steps. Since mental training is an extremely delicate procedure, mastery of any step already gained may easily be lost again; consequently it is necessary to go through the whole course of practice every time. Even though the meditator has practised in this way and has reached the fourth absorption, while practising in order to gain mastery in the fourth absorption, he must go back each time and practise from the very beginning of the first absorption. This must be done in order to gain skill in the whole procedure of practice and proficiency in moving from one absorption to another. This kind of practice not only brings full understanding of and steadiness in absorption, it can also lead on to higher attainments, such as the four non-material absorptions, for anyone interested in attaining them.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Ānāpānasati, AMBB pp.314–15

He then concludes:

To sum up, training in the five kinds of mastery is carried out in order to develop skill, speed and ability in entering absorption at will. In other words it gives the meditator control or power over the absorptions – which is what the term *vasī* really means. This training in the five kinds of mastery is so important that if it is not carried out the practice will bog down and finally collapse altogether. The meditator must observe and see the necessity for practising over and over again

to become proficient. This applies of course to every kind of work. A person practising music, for example, may in the beginning practise a certain tune or only a part of it; and if he does not work hard at it and does not really master it, he forgets it again after only a few days. Moreover if he leaves it and starts practising a different tune, he will become confused and mix up the two tunes. So in every kind of work it is necessary to practise and gain skill in every part of the job right from the beginning; and this is particularly true in the case of mental training such as this developing of the absorptions. Even school children studying mathematics have to be drilled to memorize multiplication tables and so on, to be well-versed in every step of the subject; only then can they carry on and study further. Without this basic work and constant revision everything becomes confused. This is what is meant by mastery. This proficiency leads to greater speed and dexterity and to seemingly miraculous abilities.

To illustrate mastery, we may instance the speed of a skilled worker who can make bricks or pots so fast that an ordinary person is baffled to see him at it, working twenty times faster than himself. And finally, skill and speed are the means of achieving the intended result. These are the benefits of the fivefold mastery. Every meditator must take special interest in these five kinds of mastery and train himself in them enthusiastically.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Ānāpānasati, AMBB pp.315–16

See also: **samādhi-samāpatti-kusalatā**.

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 23:27, PTSV p.704; cf. PPVM p.737.
2. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Ānāpānasati*, AMBB pp.304–17.

vasti-karma, vasti-kriyā (S/H), **basti-karma, basti-kriyā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* enema (*vasti*) practice (*karma, kriyā*); one of the six preliminary cleansing practices of *haṭha yoga*. *Vasti* can mean bladder, lower abdomen, an enema syringe, or the enema itself. See **haṭha yoga**.

vayānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of dissolution (*vaya*). See **anupassanā**.

vedanānupassanā (Pa), **vedanānupashyanā** (S) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of feelings or sensations (*vedanā*); the second of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). See **satipaṭṭhāna**.

vigil A purposeful period of wakefulness and watchfulness, usually at night, undertaken for purposes such as prayer, meditation, keeping guard *etc.*; in the Catholic Church, the night before many of the ecclesiastical festivals, previously celebrated by an all-night vigil of prayer, accompanied by fasting, and a special mass; regarded as one of the fundamental austerities of the ascetic life, along with fasting, sleeping on the ground, and so on.

Many mystics and religious people have said that the best time for prayer, meditation or contemplation is the latter part of the night, before the break of dawn, when the body and mind have been refreshed by sleep and the atmosphere is still peaceful while the world sleeps. Even in modern times, keeping a vigil at night, remaining awake in prayer or meditation is still practised in the monasteries and convents of the various religions, as well as during certain religious festivals. Many of the practitioners of the various forms of meditation current today also utilize part of the night for their spiritual practice.

There is a considerable difference, in most instances, between the rigour of the practices of the monks of the early and medieval Church and those of modern times. Nowadays, all-night vigils are almost unheard of; work and service often takes precedence over solitude and silent contemplation; many monks are well educated; fasting is limited; fresh food is readily available; and even obedience to superiors and to the monastic rule is understood in a more subtle and complex manner, interpreted in the light of modern psychology.

The thirteenth-century Syrian Christian, Bar Hebraeus, describes the kind of vigils prevalent in his day:

Vigils are to be lengthened and shortened according to the state of the solitary. For many watch during a third part of the night, two hours in its beginning and two in its end; during two thirds they lie down to sleep. Others watch during half the night, and lie down to sleep during the other half. The perfect, as Aba Arsenius, in the evening preceding Sunday turn their back to the sun, and stand till it rises before them. Helpful towards vigils are spare food and small labour and a short sleep at noon. . . . Some perform forty kneelings after the prayer of compline (night prayer, at the end of the day); others forty more after morning prayer.

Bar Hebraeus, Book of the Dove 2:5, BDH pp.25–26

According to the capacity of the monk, vigils were occupied with prayer, reading, and psalmody. The intention was to purify the mind, preparing it for contemplation:

We have been instructed to keep vigil – with prayers, readings, and the recitation of the *Psalter* – at all times, and especially at feasts. A monk who keeps vigil refines his mind (*dianoia*) for contemplation, whereas much sleep coarsens the mind (*nous*). But take care that during vigils

you do not pass the time in empty gossip or evil thought. It is better to be asleep than to keep vigil with vain words and thoughts.

Theodoros the Great Ascetic, Spiritual Texts 34, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 p.20

Spiritual reading, vigils, prayer and psalmody prevent the mind (*nous*) from being deluded by the passions.

Thalassios the Libyan, On Love 4:19, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 p.326

The body cannot be purified without fasting and vigil, the mind without mercy and truth, and the soul (*nous*) without contemplation of God and communion with Him. These pairs constitute the principal virtues in these three aspects of the human person.

Ilias the Presbyter, Gnostic Anthology 1:21, Philokalia; cf. PCT3 p.36

Isaac of Nineveh describes the effect of such vigils of an unnamed ascetic:

This saint was much given to vigils saying: "When of a night I stand till dawn and take rest after the recitation of psalms, and then wake up from sleep, on that day I am as a man who is not in this world. No single earthly thought rises in my heart, nor do I want definite regulations, but all day I am in ecstasy."

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 53, On Prayer, MTIN pp.260–61

As praiseworthy as such vigils were deemed to be, they were only a preparation for contemplation. Hence, Juan de los Ángeles says that the highest vigil is the inner spiritual vigil, in which the mind and soul are rapt in inner silence. It is

when all things are quiet within a man, and sleep, and the pure spirit alone keeps vigil and is attentive to God; when there is no sound whatsoever within the soul, because all the senses and the powers of the soul keep deepest silence. . . . And this is followed by rapture.

Juan de los Ángeles, Conquest 8:6, in NBA1 p.127; cf. in SSM1 p.306

Describing the same inner condition, Luis de la Puente alludes to a verse from the *Song of Songs*, "I sleep, but my heart is awake":¹

The inferior powers and the senses sleep, ceasing from action, and the heart keeps vigil . . . with its spiritual faculties, attentive only to the sight and the love of its beloved.

Luis de la Puente, Spiritual Guide, OLP4 p.228.; in SSM2 p.253

Spending all or a part of the night in prayer or meditation is common to all religious traditions. As a Manichaean devotee says of Mānī, probably at the time of a Manichaean festival:

We are now fulfilling your holy day,
passing the night in vigil in your joy, O glorious one.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCXL; cf. MPB p.41

Another Manichaean psalmist addressing Jesus, promises full commitment to the inner journey. Nothing is too much trouble to bring the soul (“sheep”) to eternity (“the fold”):

Rabbi, my master, I will serve your Commandment
in the joy of my whole heart.
I will not give rest to my heart,
I will not give sleep to my eyes,
I will not give rest to my feet,
until I have brought the sheep to the fold.

Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.187

Echoing the same sentiment, and also alluding, it would seem, to concentration at the centre in the forehead, a Mandaean poet also writes:

No sleep comes to mine eyes,
to mine eyes no sleep comes
and my brow keeps vigil.

Mandaean Prayer Book 149; cf. CPM p.130

See also: **dawn, night, time for prayer.**

1. *Song of Songs* 5:2, *JB*.

vimokkha-dvāra, vimokkha-mukha (Pa), vimoksha-mukha (S), rnam par thar pa'i sgo (T), jīētuōmén (C), gedatsumon (J) *Lit.* doors (*dvāra*, *sgo*, *mén*) of liberation (*vimokkha*, *thar pa*, *jīētuō*); openings (*mukha*) to liberation; gateways to liberation, emancipation, or deliverance; the triple gateway to liberation. Literally, *mukha* means ‘mouth’, hence ‘opening’, ‘door’, or ‘gateway’.

According to the Pali analytical literature, there are three different approaches to *nibbāna*, each related to one of the three primary *anupassanās* – contemplation on impermanence, suffering, and the lack of a true identity in anything, including oneself. The goal of contemplation upon these three basic facets of the world of phenomena is insight (*vipassanā*) into the true nature of existence. Each is also said to provide a different path towards or gateway to liberation. Buddhaghosa says in his *Visuddhimagga*:¹ “These three gateways to liberation (*vimokkha-mukha*) lead to exit from the world”:²

1. *Animitta-vimokkha-mukha*. Gateway to signless (*animitta*) liberation; gateway to conditionless liberation:

Whosoever, being filled with determination (*adhimokkha*), understands all things to be impermanent (*anicca*), such a person attains signless liberation (*animitta-vimokkha*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:70, PTSV p.658; cf. in BAUS

Everything in both the external and subtle realms – and this includes all aspects of mind and body – has form or ‘sign (*nimitta*)’. All sensory perceptions and mental cognitions are relative or ‘conditioned’; they are ‘signs’, phenomena, or temporary forms. By their very nature, forms are transient and liable to change. Contemplation on impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*) results in the insight that the unconditioned Reality has no form or sign (*nimitta*). The gateway to signless liberation (*animitta-vimokkha-mukha*) is therefore contemplation on impermanence. Once a sense of the transience of everything has been instilled in the mind, the meditator is automatically drawn towards *nibbāna*, which is – of its nature – formless, signless, and permanent.

According to the Pali *suttas*, the result of this practice is that, although the enlightened mind is still aware of the transience of forms, the underlying consciousness sees only the unity of Reality, not the illusory impositions and divisions of the ego. The individual observes the transience in an utterly detached manner:

The eye itself along with those visible forms will be there, yet one will not experience the corresponding sphere of sense (*āyatana*); the ear itself, ... the nose itself, ... the tongue itself, ... the body itself along with those tactile objects will be there, yet one will not experience the corresponding sphere of sense.

Anguttara Nikāya 9:37, Ānanda Sutta, PTSA4 pp.426–27;

cf. NDBB p.1301, WH183 p.37

His perception (*saññā*) is not the normal kind,
nor is his perception abnormal.
He is not without perception,
nor is perception suspended.

Sutta Nipāta 4:11, Kalahavivāda Sutta, PTSN p.170; cf. KNJ1

Friends, in the case of a monk who is fully liberated in mind, though many forms cognizable by the eye may come within the range of the eye, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is unaffected. He remains steady and imperturbable, and he

observes their passing away. Though many sounds cognizable by the ear may come into range of the ear, . . . (and so on, for the other senses).

Anguttara Nikāya 9:26, *Silāyūpopama Sutta*, PTSA4 p.404;
cf. NDBB p.1283, WH183 p.37

2. *Appaṇihita-vimokkha-mukha*. Gateway to desireless (*appaṇihita*) liberation:

Whosoever, being filled with tranquillity (*passaddhi*), understands all things as a source of suffering (*dukkha*), such a person attains desireless liberation (*appaṇihita-vimokkha*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:70, PTSV p.658; cf. in BAUS

Because of impermanence, desire or craving (*taṇhā*) for any aspect of mind or body leads to suffering (*dukkha*), since the objects of desire are always appearing, changing, and disappearing. Contemplation on suffering (*dukkhānupassanā*) results in an understanding of the transient nature of the objects of desire, and leads to the state of desireless liberation (*appaṇihita-vimokkha*). The gateway to desireless liberation (*appaṇihita-vimokkha-mukha*) is therefore contemplation on suffering. Desire for transient things only leads to suffering. Once full realization of this fact has taken root in the mind, the meditator is automatically drawn towards *nibbāna*, which is – of its nature – beyond all desires.

3. *Suññatā-vimokkha-mukha*. The gateway to emptiness liberation:

Whosoever, being filled with wisdom, considers all things as not-self (*anattā*), such a person attains emptiness liberation (*suññatā-vimokkha*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 21:70, PTSV p.658; cf. in BAUS

The sense of self or personal identity is comprised entirely of changing aspects of mind and body, known as the five aggregates (*khandhas*). This being so, there is no such thing as a permanent, individual self; nor does anything have a separate identity. Contemplation of not-self (*anattānupassanā*) leads to awareness of this lack of, or emptiness (*suññatā*) of, a substantial self or identity in anything. This is the state of emptiness liberation (*suññatā-vimokkha*). The gateway to emptiness liberation (*suññatā-vimokkha-mukha*) is therefore contemplation on non-self. This leads to insight into the nature of the emptiness, which – in the absence of the ego – automatically turns the mind of the meditator towards *nibbāna*.

The American Buddhist monk, Bhikkhu Bodhi (b.1944) summarizes and explains that *nibbāna* is not reached by turning away from the world of phenomena, but by fully observing and understanding its nature:

Though the realization of the unconditioned requires a turning away from the conditioned, it must be emphasized that this realization is achieved precisely through the understanding of the conditioned. *Nibbāna* cannot be reached by backing off from a direct confrontation with *saṃsāra* (transmigration, the world) to lose oneself in a blissful oblivion to the world. The path to liberation is a path of understanding, of comprehension and transcendence, not of escapism or emotional self-indulgence. *Nibbāna* can only be attained by turning one's gaze towards *saṃsāra*, and scrutinizing it in all its starkness. This principle – that the understanding of the conditioned is the way to the unconditioned – holds true not only in the general sense that an understanding of suffering is the spur to the quest for enlightenment, but in a deeper, more philosophical sense as well. . . .

The states of mind which realize *nibbāna* are called liberations (*vimokkha*), and these liberations are threefold according to the particular aspect of *nibbāna* they fix upon – the signless (*animitta*), the wishless (*appaṇihita*), and emptiness (*suññatā*). . . . These three liberations are each entered by a distinct gateway or door called 'the three doors to liberation (*vimokkha-mukha*)'.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, Transcendental Dependent Arising, WH277 pp.26–27

The three doors are also mentioned in *Mahāyāna* texts, where a fourth door is sometimes added, that of the inherent luminosity (*prakṛiti-prabhāsvara*) of the mind.

See also: **appaṇihitānupassanā**.

1. Cf. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 5, *PTSP2* p.35ff.
2. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21:67, *PTSV* p.657; cf. *PPVM* p.685.

vipariṇāmānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of change (*vipariṇāma*). See **anupassanā**.

vipassanā (Pa), **vipashyanā** (S), **lhag mthong** (T) *Lit.* insight; clear seeing, clear understanding; clear (*lhag*) seeing (*mthong*), clear understanding; in Buddhism, penetrating insight into the way things really are; clear, intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena (*sankhāras*, 'formations', 'fabrications', 'conditioned things', 'processes'), as they arise and disappear, seeing

them for what they actually are, in and of themselves; generally understood as both mystical insight or gnosis, as well as deep intellectual understanding.

Though the essential meaning remains the same, the understanding of *vipassanā* is coloured to some extent by the various traditions. In *Theravāda* Buddhism, *vipassanā* implies a perception of things through a deep understanding of the three marks (*tilakkhaṇa*: impermanence, suffering, and lack of separate identity) that characterize all aspects of physical and mental phenomena.

In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, *vipassanā* is an analytical examination of the true nature of things, leading (in some schools) to insight into the essential ‘emptiness (S. *shūnyatā*)’ or lack of a separate identity underlying them.

In Tibetan tantric Buddhism, *vipassanā* is a part of *mahāmudrā* practice, involving meditative reflections on the mind that are designed to bring about an intense awareness of its states and nature.

Vipassanā, as penetrating insight, often in conjunction with *samatha* (tranquillity, serenity, absence of passion and uncontrolled thoughts), appears in the earliest Pali literature (the *suttas*). It is described as one of the fruits of meditation arising on the path to enlightenment (*bodhi*), essential for both elimination of the various categories of human imperfection and attainment of *nibbāna*.

Early on in the development of Buddhism, however, in the *Abhidhamma* (analytical systematization of the Pali *suttas*) as well as in the various commentaries and associated literature, *vipassanā* gained greater prominence as something to be cultivated, almost as an end in itself. In more recent times, two Burmese *Theravāda* monks, Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923) and Mogok Sayadaw (1899–1962), revived meditational techniques based on mindfulness of breathing, thoughts, sensations and actions, with the intention of developing *vipassanā*. Later, their teaching was popularized by the Burmese monk Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982) and the Burmese-born Indian teacher S.N. Goenka (1924–2013), who both contributed greatly to the spread of the *Vipassanā* or Insight Meditation Movement in both East and West. Moving to India in 1969, S.N. Goenka taught a universal, non-sectarian and scientific approach to meditation and Buddhism, establishing a worldwide network of *vipassanā* teachers. Monks of the reformist Thai Forest Tradition, which came into being around 1900, also advocated the practice of *vipassanā* and *samatha* meditation. The various kinds of *vipassanā* and *samatha* meditation taught in present times date as far back only as these late nineteenth century monks.

In the *suttas*, *vipassanā* and *samatha* are not regarded as meditative techniques; nor are they used to mean meditation *per se*; nor are they related to any particular meditative technique such as mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). The American monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu (b. 1949) observes:

If you look directly at the Pali discourses – the earliest extant sources for our knowledge of the Buddha’s teachings – you’ll find that although they do use the word *samatha* to mean tranquillity, and *vipassanā* to mean clear seeing, they otherwise confirm none of the received

wisdom about these terms. Only rarely do they make use of the word *vipassanā* – a sharp contrast to their frequent use of the word *jhāna*. When they depict the Buddha telling his disciples to go meditate, they never quote him as saying “go do *vipassanā*,” but always “go do *jhāna*.” And they never equate the word *vipassanā* with any mindfulness techniques. In the few instances where they do mention *vipassanā*, they almost always pair it with *samatha* – not as two alternative methods, but as two qualities of mind that a person may ‘gain’ or ‘be endowed with’, and that should be developed together.¹ . . . *Vipassanā* is not a meditation technique. It’s a quality of mind – the ability to see events clearly in the present moment.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “One Tool Among Many,” in NSBP pp.33, 38

Vipassanā and *samatha* are often combined as one term, *samatha-vipassanā* (S. *shamatha-vipashyanā*), which depicts a state of tranquillity infused with deep insight into the nature of things. To one degree or another, depending upon the individual, the one is always present with the other. It is sometimes said that *vipassanā*, as penetrating insight and understanding, leads to wisdom (*paññā*), enlightenment (*bodhi*), and *nibbāna*. *Samatha*, on the other hand, together with concentration (*samādhi*), leads to attainment of the *jhānas* (four lower and four higher states of meditative absorption) and to the acquisition of supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). In fact, *vipassanā* and *samatha* are both aspects of the same spiritual ascent. According to the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha says that enlightenment can only be reached by passing through the stages of *jhāna*. He says quite clearly that he himself reached enlightenment after passage through the *jhānas*,² and that this is the path which others must travel.³

The analysis and categorizations of the *suttas*, with significant elaborations in the *Abhidhamma*, the commentaries and associated texts, distinguish between the mundane (*lokiya*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*). The supramundane comprises *nibbāna*, the *jhānas* and the four paths with their four corresponding fruits that lead through the *jhānas* to *nibbāna*. The four paths are the four stages of a noble disciple (*ariya-puggala*): the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), who has just entered upon the noble path and is able to attain the concentration required for entry into the *jhānas*, but who is still subject to human weakness; the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), whose passions have been greatly reduced and who has advanced to the stage where he only needs to take one more birth; the non-returner (*anāgāmi*), who has overcome the passions sufficiently for him to continue, after death, on the path to enlightenment and liberation from the higher worlds; and the *arahanta* (noble one) who is free from all fetters and has attained *nibbāna*. *Vipassanā* associated with any of these is generally said to be supramundane, and any other degree of *vipassanā* is regarded as mundane.

The cultivation of tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) is regarded as part of the means of overcoming negative human traits, of deepening positive understanding of the nature of things, and of fulfilling

spiritual and even social aspirations. In the *Ākankheyya Sutta*, the Buddha lists a number of things to which a monk may aspire. These include:⁴

May I be dear and agreeable to my companions in the holy life, respected and esteemed by them. . . . May I become a conqueror of discontent and delight, . . . a conqueror of fear and dread. . . . May I become one to obtain at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas* that constitute the higher mind and provide a pleasant abiding here and now. . . . May I, with the destruction of the five lower fetters (*saṃyojana*), become due to reappear spontaneously (in the pure abodes) and there attain final *nibbāna*, without ever returning from that world. . . . May I wield the various kinds of supernormal power (*iddhi*). . . . May I, with the divine ear faculty (*dibba-sota dhātu*) that is purified and surpasses the human, hear both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human, those that are far as well as near. . . . May I understand the minds of other beings, of other persons, having encompassed them with my own mind. . . . May I recollect my manifold past lives.

Majjhima Nikāya 6, Ākankheyya Sutta, PTSM1 pp.33–35; cf. MDBB pp.115–17

To attain these, says the *sutta*, a monk must

follow the precepts (*pātimokkha*, monastic code), be devoted to internal serenity (*samatha*) of mind, not neglect meditation (*jhāna*), be possessed of insight (*vipassanā*), and dwell in empty huts (live a life of renunciation).

Majjhima Nikāya 6, Ākankheyya Sutta, PTSM1 pp.33–36, MDBB pp.115–17

Other *suttas* repeat the same – that *samatha* and *vipassanā* are a part of the way by which spiritual aspirations may be fulfilled:

Bhikkhus, for direct knowledge, . . . full understanding, . . . utter destruction, . . . abandoning, . . . elimination, . . . vanishing, . . . fading away, . . . cessation, . . . giving up, . . . and relinquishing of hatred, . . . delusion, . . . anger, . . . hostility, . . . denigration, . . . insolence, . . . envy, . . . miserliness, . . . deceitfulness, . . . craftiness, . . . obstinacy, . . . vehemence, . . . conceit, . . . arrogance, . . . intoxication, . . . and heedlessness, these two things are to be developed. Which two? Tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).

Anguttara Nikāya 2:320–479, Rāgaṭṭhāyāla, PTSA1 p.100; cf. NDBB pp.192–93

And similarly:

Bhikkhus, these two things pertain to true knowledge. Which two? Tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). When tranquillity

(*samatha*) is developed, what benefit does one experience? The mind (*citta*) is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit does one experience? Lust (*rāga*) is abandoned. When insight (*vipassanā*) is developed, what benefit does one experience? Wisdom (*paññā*) is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit does one experience? Ignorance (*avijjā*) is abandoned.

Anguttara Nikāya 2:31, Bālavagga, PTSA1 p.61; cf. NDBB p.152

Wisdom (*paññā*), here, refers to the highest degree of *vipassanā*. It is gnosis or direct mystical perception, rather than intellectual and analytical knowledge. This arises automatically, along with an increasing tranquillity (*samatha*) as the meditator rises up through the *jhānas*.

It is also said that of those who meditate, “some acquire internal tranquillity (*samatha*) of mind but not the higher wisdom (*adhipaññā*) of insight (*vipassanā*) into phenomena.” Some acquire insight but not tranquillity, some acquire both, and some neither. The “higher wisdom of insight” refers to the mystic awareness of how things come about in this and the higher realms. A person who lacks either insight or tranquillity, says the text, should focus on what he lacks, seek guidance from someone who has attained what he lacks, and “then, some time later, he will gain both.” Someone who has acquired both insight and tranquillity should continue focusing on both, and “make a further effort to attain destruction of the impurities (*āsava*).”⁵ Someone who has acquired neither, on the other hand,

should use his utmost resolution, effort, zeal, diligence, endeavour, undivided mindfulness and clear-mindedness to obtain both those wholesome qualities. just as one whose clothes or head have caught fire will put forth utmost resolution, effort, ... *etc.* to extinguish the fire on his clothes or head. Then, some time later, he will acquire both internal tranquillity (*samatha*) of mind and the higher wisdom of insight (*vipassanā*) into phenomena.

Anguttara Nikāya 4:93, PTSA2 p.93; cf. NDBB p.474

The *Yuganaddha Sutta* observes that *vipassanā* and *samatha* are essential aspects of the path to becoming an *arahanta* (noble one, enlightened one):

Whoever – monk or nun – declares the attainment of arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of four paths. Which four? There is the case where a monk has developed insight (*vipassanā*) preceded by tranquillity (*samatha*). As he develops insight (*vipassanā*) preceded by tranquillity (*samatha*), the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, cultivates it. As he follows

the path, developing it and cultivating it – his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

Anguttara Nikāya 4:170, Yuganaddha Sutta, PTSa2 p.157; cf. ANTB

The other three paths are the various combinations of *vipassanā* and *samatha*, as previously described. But the *sutta* does not offer any particular meditational technique for passing through the *jhānas* and reaching *nibbāna*. It simply states what has been repeated in the earlier *sutta*, that no one reaches enlightenment without developing *vipassanā* and *samatha*. This is axiomatic of any spiritual path. Modern *vipassanā* meditation and *samatha* meditation techniques invoke the help of mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath (*ānāpānasati*), which is described in the Pali *suttas* as a means of ascent through the *jhānas*. Liberation (*mokkha*), enlightenment (*bodhi*) and *nibbāna* all point to the same state of being, which lies beyond *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* – beyond the four lower and four higher *jhānas*.

According to the analytical commentary, the *Anguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, when a practitioner reaches the first *jhāna*, he emerges from it and, by way of non-analytical, meditative observation, he explores its nature as impermanent, a source of suffering, and indicative of the absence of a permanent ‘self’. Likewise for the other *jhānas*.⁶ This represents a common aspect of *vipassanā* techniques as they developed in later centuries through the analytical *Abhidhamma* and related literature. Insight is developed by close observation and meditative analysis of the object of meditation.

Vipassanā is an aspect of what is known in the *suttas* as *saññā*, a term with a wide spread of meaning that is variously translated as ‘perception’, ‘knowing’, ‘cognition’, ‘awareness’ and so on, depending upon the context and the translator. In modern terminology, *saññā* covers all functions of the mind, whether in the human sphere or in the higher realms of *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*. When absorbed in one of the *jhānas*, various mental functions are still active, including that of *vipassanā*. It is this aspect of mental function that sees the true nature of the *jhāna*. At that level, *vipassanā* is a faculty of quiescent and meditative observation that sees the various aspects of mental function that still exist there. On emerging from the *jhāna*, the analytical aspects of *vipassanā* may again become active, and a more intellectual kind of *vipassanā* comes to the fore. It is the latter that seems to be the focus of the techniques suggested by the *Abhidhamma* and associated literature, as well as by the proponents of the modern variations.

The *Abhidhamma*, together with texts such as Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*, chart the development of *vipassanā*. First, there is perception and insight into the nature of material forms (*rūpa*), then of mental phenomena (*nāma*), then of both (*nāmarūpa*), then of both as perceived through an understanding of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), and finally as perceived

through an understanding of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of existence (impermanence, suffering, and not-self).

In these analytical and intellectual works, it is not always clear whether the various writers are understanding *vipassanā* as mystical perception of the way things are or as deep intellectual understanding. This is true throughout the literature concerning *vipassanā*, ancient and modern. Buddhaghosa, for instance, writes of nine stages of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), which constitute the sixth stage of purification in his scheme of things. The nine stages of *vipassanā-ñāṇa* begin with the meditative observation of impermanence, suffering, and not-self; progress through increasing awareness and contemplation of the fearful nature of transmigration and the conditions prevailing in this world, of its inherent misery, of aversion to it, of the arising of desire for liberation from it, of equanimity with regard to it, and finally complete acceptance of its reality.⁷

In addition to these nine insight-knowledges, Buddhaghosa also lists “eighteen principal insights (*mahāvīpassanā*)”.⁸ Also known as the eighteen *anupassanās* (contemplations, reflections), these begin with contemplation or reflection on the three characteristics of phenomena, and continue through contemplation on various aspects of and attitudes towards the changing nature of phenomena. They include such things as disenchantment (*nibbīdānupassanā*), renunciation (*paṭinissaggānupassanā*), decay (*khayānupassanā*), meditation (*paṭisankhānupassanā*), and finally turning away (*vivaṭṭānupassanā*) from the cycle of rebirth.

In modern times, there is a wealth of schools and literature teaching various forms of what are called ‘insight meditation’ and ‘tranquillity meditation’ (*vipassanā* and *samatha bhāvanā*). In these practices, the initial goal is to attain *vipassanā* or *samatha* or both. The techniques employ concentration on one or other of the forty classical meditation themes and objects (*kammaṭṭhānas*), the difference being not only in the way the meditation is practised, but its goal. *Samatha bhāvanā* emphasizes concentration (*samādhi*) in order to arrive at a one-pointedness where the mind is fully fixed on one single object and is not allowed to wander away from it. This brings about a state of tranquillity and serenity where passions and imperfections are at least temporarily suppressed. No analysis or meditative observation is involved in *samatha*.

Vipassanā bhāvanā, on the other hand, uses a form of mindfulness in which concentration is focused upon the observation and analysis of every aspect of the meditation object and its interaction with other objects. The aim is to understand its nature and to examine it without any preconceived ideas or prejudices, through the lens of the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of existence (impermanence, suffering, and not-self). This specific observation leads to deep understanding of all mind-body phenomena. When a full understanding of the meditation object in all its details is reached, wisdom (*paññā*) concerning it is said to have been attained.

Although the two practices may seem distinct, they in fact rely upon each other, as described in the Pali *suttas*. To attempt the cultivation of *vipassanā* without a well-developed power of concentration will prove frustrating if not impossible, since the mind will continually wander away from the subject of the meditation. For the development of concentration, the practice of *samatha* meditation is recommended; and when concentration develops and the consciousness rises, then an awareness of the essential characteristics of existence automatically arises:

Some traditions speak of two types of meditation, insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and calm meditation (*samatha*). In fact, the two are indivisible facets of the same process. Calm is the peaceful happiness born of meditation; insight is the clear understanding born of the same meditation. Calm leads to insight and insight leads to calm.

Ajahn Brahm, Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond, MBBB p.25

The difference between *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation as they are practised by the various schools can be understood by way of example. Suppose a meditator is practising mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*). In *samatha* meditation, the meditator counts the number of breaths, or concentrates on the movement of the rise and fall of the abdomen with the aim of producing one-pointed concentration; but pays no attention to other details.

In *vipassanā* meditation, on the other hand, the meditator may observe whether the breath is long or short, slow or fast, and what happens to the abdomen as it rises and falls. He may observe that its rising and falling are made of many incremental rises and falls, not just one overall rise and fall. He may observe that every small rise has a beginning and an end, a birth and death so to speak – that it is not permanent (*anicca*). He may even feel some fear, thinking that if this rise and fall should stop, he may die – a thought that may cause him anxiety and suffering (*dukkha*). This, too, he observes. He may also note that the abdomen both reacts to the breathing and depends upon it, leading to the observation that neither is independent of the other. Extrapolating from this observation, he understands that, in the same way, all material and mental phenomena are dependent for their existence on other such phenomena. No thing and no living being has an independent ‘self’ of its own. Everything is in a state of constant flux. This is the principle of not-self (*anattā*).

Again, consider the example of a meditator who is using a sunflower head as a colour object (*kasīṇa*) on which to focus the attention. In *samatha* meditation, he will concentrate intensely on the sunflower head until he has created an independent mental image of it in the absence of the original sunflower. As his concentration progresses, his mind becomes merged into that image. While performing this practice, he does not observe the particular features of

the sunflower, only its overall shape and colour. In *samatha* meditation, the emphasis is laid on the mental image of the object, not of its many details.

In *vipassanā* meditation, on the other hand, the meditator concentrates on the detail of the sunflower head. He notes its every feature and characteristic: its circular shape, its anatomy, the leaves, the stem, the petals with all their shades and colours, the number of seeds it has, how it turns and follows the sun, and so on. He may also observe that a sunflower head forms a natural *maṇḍala*. A complete understanding of the sunflower, its manner of reproduction, its life and finally its death provides the *vipassanā* meditator with a clear example of impermanence (*anicca*) and its concomitant suffering (*dukkha*), and the lack of self-existence (*anattā*), with everything depending upon something else for its finite existence (dependent origination).

The benefits of both forms of meditation are described by the Buddhist practitioner Francis Story. She begins by referring to the *Sankhepavaṇṇanā*, a commentary on the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* by Saddhammajotipāla:

Samatha bhāvanā, the development of mental tranquillity with concentration, is accompanied by three benefits; it gives happiness in the present life, a favourable rebirth and the freedom from mental defilements,⁹ which is a prerequisite for attainment of insight. In *samatha*, the mind becomes like a still, clear pool completely free from disturbance and agitation, and ready to mirror on its surface the nature of things as they really are, the aspect of them which is hidden from ordinary knowledge by the restlessness of craving. It is the peace and fulfilment which is depicted on the features of the Buddha, investing his images with a significance that impresses even those who have no knowledge of what it means. Such an image of the Buddha can itself be a very suitable object of meditation, and is, in fact, the one that most Buddhists instinctively use. The very sight of the tranquil image can calm and pacify a mind distraught with worldly hopes and fears. It is the certain and visible assurance of *nibbāna*.

Vipassanā bhāvanā is realization of the three signs of being – *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* – by direct insight. These three characteristics – impermanence, suffering, and non-self – can be grasped intellectually, as scientific and philosophical truth, but this is not in itself sufficient to rid the mind of egoism and craving. The final objective lies on a higher level of awareness, the direct ‘intuitional’ plane, where it is actually experienced as ... fact. Until this personal confirmation is obtained, the sphere of sense perception (*āyatana*) and sensory responses remain stronger than the intellectual conviction; the two function side by side on different levels of consciousness, but it is usually the sphere dominated by *avijjā* (ignorance or delusion) which continues to determine the course of life by volitional action. The philosopher who fails to live according to his philosophy is the

most familiar example of this incompatibility between theory and practice. When the direct perception is obtained, however, what was at its highest intellectual level still merely a theory becomes actual knowledge, in precisely the same way that we ‘know’ when we are hot or cold, hungry or thirsty. The mind that has attained it is established in the *Dhamma*, and *paññā* (wisdom) has taken the place of delusion.

Francis Story, Buddhist Meditation, BL15 p.5

The Thai Buddhist monk, reformer and rigorous thinker Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993), who believed that an advanced spiritual understanding rejects all religious identification,¹⁰ writes specifically of the kind of insight that is to be developed:

Vipassanā meditation is mental training aimed at raising the mind to such a level that it is no longer subject to suffering. The mind breaks free from suffering by virtue of the clear knowledge that nothing is worth grasping at or clinging to. This knowledge deprives worldly things of their ability to lead the mind into further thoughtless liking or disliking. Having this knowledge, the mind transcends the worldly condition and attains the level known as the supramundane plane (*lokuttara-bhūmi*).

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Handbook for Mankind, HMBB p.114

When this kind of understanding has been developed,

vipassanā has progressed properly, and the birth, aging, pain and death of phenomena have been thoroughly scrutinized. The arising and passing away of phenomena has been perceived in all clarity. All phenomenal existence is seen to consist of just an endless process of arising and ceasing like the glittering dazzle on the surface of the sea, or like the forming and bursting of the foamy crests of waves. This is known as knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*). It is brought about by concentrated introspection so clear and sustained, for so long a time, that the knowledge becomes firmly established, like a dye absorbed by the mind, powerful enough to make the meditator become disenchanted with things and give up clinging to them.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Handbook for Mankind, HMBB p.105

Because *samatha* arises from a concentrated, undisturbed, peaceful and pure mind, it is itself sometimes equated with *samādhi* (concentration) and translated as such. Likewise, since the highest development of *vipassanā*, as insight into the fundamental nature of the three characteristics, is mystical wisdom (*paññā*), *vipassanā* is sometimes translated as ‘wisdom’. Ajahn

Chah, a well-known teacher of the Thai Forest Tradition, has some practical suggestions regarding the practice and development of both. Explaining how wisdom or *vipassanā* arises from *samatha*, from “peace and serenity”, he points out that it is not possible “to sit down . . . and practise wisdom”:

When we begin to wield the peace and serenity we’ve been developing in meditation to contemplate these things, wisdom arises. This is what I call wisdom. This is *vipassanā*. It’s not something fabricated and construed. If we’re wise, *vipassanā* will develop naturally. We don’t have to label what’s happening. If there’s only a little clarity of insight, we call this ‘little *vipassanā*’. When clear seeing increases a bit, we call that ‘moderate *vipassanā*’. If knowing is fully in accordance with the Truth, we call that ‘ultimate *vipassanā*’. Personally, I prefer to use the word wisdom (*paññā*) rather than *vipassanā*. If we think we are going to sit down from time to time and practise *vipassanā* meditation, we’re going to have a very difficult time of it. Insight has to proceed from peace and tranquillity. The entire process will happen naturally of its own accord. We can’t force it.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD p.521

Therefore, he says, *samatha* and *vipassanā* are inextricably linked:

Concentration (*samatha*) and wisdom (*vipassanā*) work together. First the mind becomes still by holding on to a meditation object. It is quiet only while you are sitting with your eyes closed. This is *samatha* and eventually this *samādhi*-base is the cause for wisdom or *vipassanā* to arise. Then the mind is still whether you sit with your eyes closed or walk around in a busy city.

It’s like this. Once you were a child. Now you are an adult. Are the child and the adult the same person? You can say that they are, or looking at it another way, you can say that they are different. In this way, *samatha* and *vipassanā* could also be looked at as separate. Or it is like food and faeces. Food and faeces could be called the same and they can be called different.

Don’t just believe what I say, do your practice and see for yourself. Nothing special is needed. If you examine how concentration and wisdom arise, you will know the truth for yourself. These days many people cling to the words. They call their practice *vipassanā*. *Samatha* is looked down on. Or they call their practice *samatha*. It is essential to do *samatha* before *vipassanā*, they say. All this is silly. Don’t bother to think about it in this way. Simply do the practice and you’ll see for yourself.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD pp.90–91

What is important is not theory, but experience:

Concerning this issue of *samatha* and *vipassanā*, the important thing is to develop these states in our own hearts. Only when we genuinely cultivate them ourselves will we know what they actually are.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD p.509

Ajahn Chah also points out that meditation has to be founded upon high moral and ethical standards:

These days there are many people teaching *vipassanā* and a wide range of meditation techniques. I'll say this: doing *vipassanā* is not easy. We can't just jump straight into it. It won't work if it's not proceeding from a high standard of morality. Find out for yourself. Moral discipline and training precepts are necessary, because if our behaviour, actions and speech aren't impeccable we'll never be able to stand on our own two feet. Meditation without virtue is like trying to skip over an essential section of the path. Similarly, occasionally you hear people say, "You don't need to develop tranquillity. Skip over it and go straight into the insight meditation of *vipassanā*." Sloppy people who like to cut corners say things like this. They say you don't have to bother with moral discipline. Upholding and refining your virtue is challenging, not just playing around. If we could skip over all the teachings on ethical behaviour, we'd have it pretty easy, wouldn't we? Whenever we'd encounter a difficulty, we just avoid it by skipping over it. Of course, we'd all like to skip over the difficult bits.

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD p.524

See also: **anupassanā, mahāmudrā, samatha, vipassanā-ñāṇa** (8.1).

1. *E.g. Majjhima Nikāya* 149 (*Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta*), 151 (*Piṇḍapāta-pārisuddhi Sutta*), *PTSM3* pp.289–90, 297.
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 66, *Laṭukikopama Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.455–56.
3. *E.g. Majjhima Nikāya* 36, *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.247–49.
4. *Cf. Anguttara Nikāya* 10:71, *Ākankheyya Sutta*, *PTSA5* pp.131–33.
5. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:92–94, *PTSA2* pp.92–95; *cf. NDBB* pp.473–76; see also *e.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 9:4 (*Nandaka Sutta*), 10:54 (*Samatha Sutta*), *PTSA4* pp.359–61, *PTSA5* pp.98–100; *Majjhima Nikāya* 73 (*Mahāvaccagotta Sutta*), 149 (*Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta*), *PTSM1* p.494, *PTSM3* p.289.
6. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, *NDBB* pp.1706–7 (n.861).
7. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 21, *PTSV* pp.639–71.
8. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20:89–92, 22:113, *PTSV* pp.628–29, 694.

9. See Saddhammajotipāla, *Sankhepavaṇṇanā* (commentary on *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*).
10. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *No Religion, NRBB*.

virāgānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of dispassion (*virāga*). See *anupassanā*.

visioning A Native North American technique for being able to see people and things in a way that sees truth or deception without speaking; used in healing or in simply trying to understand and empathize with others; a way of seeing by means of the inner light, with the eyes of the Creator and His spirit helpers.

Frank Fools Crow (c. 1890–1989), a much-respected social and spiritual leader of the Oglala Sioux, speaks extensively of his use of “visioning”, both in his spiritual life and his work as a healer. His words were recorded with the help of Thomas Mails, who observes:

It can be seen that through visioning, without his having learned the biological manner in which the left and right brain work, Fools Crow was taught a life way that drew naturally upon the right brain. He went on to say that visioning was like opening a door, but a person must walk through the door to experience the wondrous things that are in the great and magical room on the other side. Even when we get there, he added, it is absolutely fundamental that we must “believe in order to see”, rather than to follow the scientific approach of seeing in order to believe. “How else,” Fools Crow asked, “can *Wakan-Tanka* (Great Spirit) and the helpers show their wonders to us?”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.66

Being pure of heart requires a completely different approach to life than that of the average person. The Sioux holy men truly believed this. Visioning brought them in touch with their higher powers and enabled them to see through untainted eyes. Seeing with love for all of God’s creation gave them the power to see from an altogether higher spiritual level:

When I do visioning with my mind eyes and heart, I see through the eyes of the higher powers and not as people with only natural powers do. This is usually the reverse of what humans will see because we are influenced by our motives and desires.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.65

Most people live in the world of action and reaction, reacting to what others say or do instead of quietly observing, deeply empathizing, and realizing

that all are brothers and sisters, that everyone comes from the same Father, whatever differences of temperament and personality they may have. Visioning of this kind is therefore quite different from superficial perception and communication:

Wakan-Tanka and the helpers have helped me imagine things that cannot be seen by the physical eye. I can feel and see things most others miss. Pictures come into my mind, and soon I can find new approaches and ways to change everything around me. This is very helpful when I am curing or healing. When I am alone at night or between treatments, one of the things I do is visioning. Through it, *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers enable me to overcome obstacles that the illness or evil powers are raising up. And they tell me different ways to go to overcome these. By this, what would otherwise be impossible becomes possible. . . .

I use my eyes to touch with gentleness and love. When I cry for someone, I am touching them with my eyes. You can tell a lot about a person by looking into their eyes, and you can say things to people with your eyes that you cannot say with words. Eyes betray truth or dishonesty. They tell me how a person really feels about me. Many illnesses can be seen in people's eyes when you know how to look. When I am curing or healing, I give my faith to the person by sending it to them through my eyes. We make contact, and if they don't have enough faith already, what they see in me as the days pass will become theirs. This is one of the ways I get their mind inside of my mind so that they can see what I am being shown by *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers. I already told you that this is the first thing I have to do to be successful in treating them.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.63–64

Fools Crow speaks of the happiness he experiences when he sees a light that reveals things previously hidden from sight. He is describing an alternate universe, one where love and caring supersede distrust and greed:

Wakan-Tanka and the helpers cast spiritual light onto things so that I can see them for what they really are. You will notice how the sun does this to the earth during the day, and how things look different in different light. That is what the higher powers do for me in spiritual matters. This light also pushes the darkness away and shows me what is there. It helps me walk around things and see them from different points of view – front, back, and both sides. I see new colours and I feel what is going on around me. Then I close my eyes and wait for the images to form on my mind screen. I continue to do this until all of the information comes together in a way I can see it. Then I concentrate even harder until the final picture is struck firmly in my memory. Sometimes I cry because of the great beauty of it all. Ordinary things

become extraordinary. What is nothing to someone else becomes marvellous to me and an exciting way to go.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.62–63

This visioning of Fools Crow was a powerful tool because the physical eyes are usually fooled by subconscious interpretations of what is seen. As the saying goes, “We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are.”¹ Frank Fools Crow also says:

Wakan-Tanka and the helpers taught me how to see with my mind, touch with my eyes, and decide with my heart. . . . The mind can see farther than the physical eye. It can see what a camera can’t see. It can see beyond physical barriers and even into a person. The mind’s eye changes the way we judge things. . . .

When we see with our mind we do not judge people or situations by their appearances. A person might not be beautiful on the outside, but will be a beautiful person on the inside. And when we serve as (hollow) bones for *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers, we learn to see things in a new and magical light, to look at people and situations in different ways. Visioning is learning to let the powers show you things through their eyes. People deny themselves wonders by failing to recognize that this can happen. . . .

The higher powers . . . are not limited as we are. They see the past, present, and future as one. They also know what is going on in people’s minds and hearts, and they know what following a certain pathway will lead to. When we pray and listen, when we are using concentration tools, the higher powers can show us these things, and increase our wisdom.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.61–62

“Bones”, here, refers to hollow bones that were used for pouring water. Frank Fools Crow is likening clean and unobstructed bones to a pure person, whose perception goes beyond the merely physical. This kind of deep understanding is best learnt from someone. When asked, “Where did you learn about this kind of visioning?”, Frank Fools Crow replied, “Iron Cloud taught me how to do it, and my father, Eagle Bear, also knew how.”²

But the mind also has its limitations, which is why Fools Crow tries to understand others through compassion and fellow feeling:

If I decide with my mind, I am influenced by all kinds of thoughts that fight against one another. If I try to decide with my eyes, even though I see with love, it is hard not to be influenced by what I actually see – how people look, react, and what they are doing. If I decide with my heart, my judgments are never harsh. My heart takes into account the things that have hurt people – what they have had to deal with just to

stay sane and alive. I guess this can be applied to most of the people in the world. My heart thinks about fairness, comfort, and hope. It is like *Wakan-Tanka*'s heart, which accepts us as bones to work in and through even though none of us deserves this great honour.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.64–65

Speaking of the light that appears inside when he focuses on the inner darkness, he says:

When I close my eyes and sing, I roll my eyes up a little and look at the inside of my forehead. A small black screen forms there, and when I concentrate upon it, it is not long before colours come streaking in. They come in different ways at different times. What Stirrup (his primary teacher) taught me is to remember either the first two colours I see, or the two that are the brightest. Then I am to paint these on my hoop as a guide to which of the directions I am to call in to begin my quest for answers. *Wakan-Tanka* knows that having more than two colours to call in can be confusing. If I get a colour other than those of the Directions, or for *Wakan-Tanka* or Mother Earth, that is my colour, and I know I am supposed to look within myself and examine myself as part of reaching the solution.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.41

By “directions”, he is speaking of the spirits of the four directions. When asked, “Is this the same as having a vision?”, he replied, “No. But it is what I call ‘visioning’.”³ He continues:

Wakan-Tanka and the helpers do not personally come, but contact is made with them. You can say they have answered the telephone and are ready to talk to me. But the power only comes to me and goes into action when I begin to use the concentration tools, such as a medicine hoop or crystal that *Wakan-Tanka* has given us. Each of the higher powers has its own animal or bird messenger, and after we have used each concentration tool, this messenger brings to us a basketful of gifts bearing answers.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM p.41

Frank Fools Crow also explains that listening to the sound of things leads to a heightened sensitivity to the presence of *Wakan-Tanka*:

Everything that exists has a sound, and when things pass close by one another there is even sound between them. This is how music comes into being. *Wakan-Tanka*, Grandmother Earth, and the other helpers use sounds to communicate to us – sometimes in words, but more often to stir up our minds and hearts to think of spiritual things.

Grandmother Earth speaks to us through the drum. Rattles are the soft voice of *Wakan-Tanka* sending showers of blessings down to earth. Flutes are the many voices of the Persons in the directions. Thunder is the powerful voice of the awesome cloud beings. It is the ears that rocks speak to first, and through the ears to the mind, spirit, and heart. All of the beautiful sounds that exist or come into being are *Wakan-Tanka*'s creations, and like the other beautiful things He has made. He is a sucker for them. He can't resist coming closer when we use them. We know He is there and sharing the experience with us.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.65–66

See also: **concentration tools, vision quest.**

1. Generally attributed to the American writer Anaïs Nin (1903–1977).
2. Frank Fools Crow, *Fools Crow*, FCWM p.61.
3. Frank Fools Crow, *Fools Crow*, FCWM p.41.

vision quest A Native American retreat, sometimes as an initiatory rite, traditionally undertaken by boys who are entering adulthood, under the guidance of a *wichasha wakan* (shaman) or the community elders, in which the individual spends four days and nights alone at a sacred and isolated site in nature, praying and seeking a vision that answers some major question, or provides help or guidance in some other manner, or augments spiritual power and understanding.

Although the approach of manhood is a common time for a vision quest, it may be undertaken at any period of crisis or transition, or when some significant decision is to be made. Some holy men, seeking to increase their understanding, have made numerous vision quests during the course of their lives. Some have made it an annual affair, using the vision quest as a means of augmenting spiritual power. Some have extended the period up to fifteen days. In the more traditional past, Native American women have also sought guidance through a vision quest.

Before beginning the vision quest, the individual undergoes purification, perhaps in an *inipi* (Lakota, sweat lodge). During the period of the vision quest, he remains awake, fasting and drinking as little water as possible, praying to the spirit world for a vision or revelation to guide him towards or to grant him whatever it is he is seeking. This could be a blessing of spiritual power and wisdom, perhaps by attracting a spirit guide from the other world, who will act as protector and advisor to him throughout his life; or it may be to understand what use he should make of his life, and how best he may serve his people; or it may be for the granting of some special favour or the resolution of some problem by *Wakan-Tanka* (Great Spirit).

According to the directions of the *wichasha wakan*, the vision quester may smoke a sacred pipe during the course of the vision quest, smoke being

regarded as a means of conveying messages to the spirits, even to *Wakan-Tanka* Himself. A person may also receive a name after the vision quest, based on his visionary experience. Visions and dreams experienced at this time may require interpretation by the shaman or elders of the tribe. As a result of the experience, a young man may become apprenticed to someone who can help him fulfil the guidance he has received. Visionary experiences are not to be divulged lightly; and to relate one's experiences is regarded as something sacred. This may be done in a ceremonial lodge immediately after the ending of the vision quest.

The fruits of a vision quest can vary greatly, and the visions themselves vary considerably. Sometimes animals, actual or visionary, may appear. Some vision questers have learnt songs and dances; a small number have been taught new rites or ceremonies; still others have been shown particular healing techniques or remedies; many have been the recipients of spiritual power in general and specific powers in particular. Political or social solutions to certain problems have also been received during vision quests. According to the legend, Burnt Face, a young boy who had fallen into a fire, was spontaneously guided to construct a large medicine wheel out of stones in the mountains while on a vision quest. It was the first medicine wheel ever to have been constructed.

The form of the rite varies to some extent among different Native American traditions, and the term 'vision quest' is used in a general sense and often fails to translate exactly the terms used in the various original languages. The Lakota *hanbleceya*, for example, means 'crying for a vision', 'praying intensely for a vision', or 'lamenting for a vision'. The kind of vision or guidance experienced depends to a large extent on the character and nature of the individual. The Lakota Sioux holy man Black Elk (1863–1950) explains:

The 'crying for a vision' ritual, like the purification rites of the *inipi*, was used long before the coming of our most sacred pipe. This way of praying is very important, and indeed it is at the centre of our religion, for from it we have received many good things even the four great rites...

Every man can 'cry for a vision', or 'lament'; and in the old days we all – men and women – 'lamented' all the time. What is received through the 'lamenting' is determined in part by the character of the person who does this, for it is only those people who are very qualified who receive the great visions, which are interpreted by our holy man, and which give strength and health to our nation. It is very important for a person who wishes to lament to receive aid and advice from a *wichasha wakan* (holy man) so that everything is done correctly, for if things are not done in the right way, something very bad can happen, and even a serpent could come and wrap itself around the 'lamerter'...

But perhaps the most important reason for 'lamenting' is that it helps us to realize our oneness with all things, to know that all things

are our relatives; and then on behalf of all things we pray to *Wakan-Tanka* that He may give us knowledge of Him who is the Source of all things, yet greater than all things.

Black Elk, Sacred Pipe, SP p.46

The traditional Lakota elder Wallace Black Elk (1921–2004), a pupil and spiritual descendant of Black Elk, has undertaken many vision quests, and provides some idea of what the experience means to him:

Most people don't understand *hanbleceya*. If I were to explain it real deep, that would take maybe two or three days. To really understand it, you have to go up there on the hill and be isolated. Like I have gone on many vision quests. Each time the spirits tell me when to go. They also tell me where to go. So there were times that I was scared, too, but I had to go. I had to carry out this vision.

It may look like it's real simple, but it's not simple. It's really tough. At those times I have to have courage, I have to have patience, I have to have endurance, and I have to have alertness. All these four you have to have to be an Earth Man. So I learn, too. When I go on vision quest, I stand before *Tunkashila*. I wear a robe, and there is no eating of food. I go there and hold the *chanunpa* (sacred pipe) in my hands. Then the wisdom, knowledge, power, and gift are in my hands. In other words, the "In God We Trust" is in my hands. So I respect and I love.

When you go inside that power, there's no fear. It's so beautiful! There's no fear there. There's no pain. You won't even feel that fire. That fire will comfort you – cool, lukewarm, warm, like that. And the scent is so beautiful. You could smell it. It's really beautiful! So when I go there, I could say anything.

Wallace Black Elk, Sacred Ways of a Lakota, BESW p.138

Black Elk himself describes a vision quest in the woods when he was eighteen, accompanied at the outset by the spiritual guide Few Tails:

We came to a high hill close to Grass Creek, which is just a little way west from here. There was nobody there but the old man and myself and the sky and the earth. But the place was full of people; for the spirits were there.

The sun was almost setting when we came to the hill, and the old man helped me make the place where I was to stand. We went to the highest point of the hill and made the ground there sacred by spreading sage upon it. Then Few Tails set a flowering stick in the middle of the place, and on the west, the north, the east, and the south sides of it he placed offerings of red willow bark tied into little bundles with scarlet cloth.

Few Tails now told me what I was to do so that the spirits would hear me and make clear my next duty. I was to stand in the middle, crying and praying for understanding. Then I was to advance from the centre to the quarter of the west and mourn there awhile. Then I was to back up to the centre, and from there approach the quarter of the north, wailing and praying there, and so on all around the circle. This I had to do all night long.

It was time for me to begin lamenting, so Few Tails went away somewhere and left me there all alone on the hill with the spirits and the dying light. Standing in the centre of the sacred place and facing the sunset, I began to cry, and while crying I had to say: "O Great Spirit, accept my offerings! Oh, make me understand!"

As I was crying and saying this, there soared a spotted eagle from the west and whistled shrill and sat upon a pine tree east of me.

I walked backwards to the centre, and from there approached the north, crying and saying: "O Great Spirit, accept my offerings and make me understand!" Then a chicken hawk came hovering and stopped upon a bush towards the south.

I walked backwards to the centre once again and from there approached the east, crying and asking the Great Spirit to help me understand, and there came a black swallow flying all around me, singing, and stopped upon a bush not far away.

Walking backwards to the centre, I advanced upon the south. Until now I had only been trying to weep, but now I really wept, and the tears ran down my face; for as I looked yonder towards the place whence come the life of things, the nation's hoop and the flowering tree, I thought of the days when my relatives, now dead, were living and young, and of Crazy Horse who was our strength and would never come back to help us any more.

I cried very hard, and I thought it might be better if my crying would kill me; then I could be in the other world where nothing is ever in despair.

And while I was crying, something was coming from the south. It looked like dust far off, but when it came closer, I saw it was a cloud of beautiful butterflies of all colours. They swarmed around me so thick that I could see nothing else.

I walked backwards to the flowering stick again, and the spotted eagle on the pine tree spoke and said: "Behold these! They are your people. They are in great difficulty and you shall help them." Then I could hear all the butterflies that were swarming over me, and they were all making a pitiful, whimpering noise as though they too were weeping.

Then they all arose and flew back into the south.

Now the chicken hawk spoke from its bush and said: "Behold! Your Grandfathers shall come forth and you shall hear them!"

Hearing this, I lifted up my eyes, and there was a big storm coming from the west. It was the thunder-being nation, and I could hear the neighing of horses and the sending of great voices.

It was very dark now, and all the roaring west was streaked fearfully with swift fire.

And as I stood there looking, a vision broke out of the shouting blackness torn with fire, and I saw the two men who had come to me first in my great vision. They came head first like arrows slanting earthward from a long flight; and when they neared the ground, I could see a dust rising there and out of the dust the heads of dogs were peeping. Then suddenly I saw that the dust was the swarm of many-coloured butterflies hovering all around and over the dogs.

By now the two men were riding sorrel horses, streaked with black lightning, and they charged with bows and arrows down upon the dogs, while the thunder beings cheered for them with roaring voices.

Then suddenly the butterflies changed, and were storm-driven swallows, swooping and whirling in a great cloud behind the charging riders.

The first of these now plunged upon a dog's head and arose with it, hanging bloody on his arrow point, while the whole west roared with cheering. The second did the same; and the black west flashed and cheered again. Then as the two arose together, I saw that the dogs' heads had changed to the heads of *wasichus* (white men); and as I saw, the vision went out and the storm was close upon me, terrible to see and roaring.

I cried harder than ever now, for I was much afraid. The night was black about me and terrible with swift fire and the sending of great voices and the roaring of the hail. And as I cried, I begged the Grandfathers to pity me and spare me and told them that I knew now what they wanted me to do on earth, and I would do it if I could.

All at once I was not afraid any more, and I thought that if I was killed, probably I might be better off in the other world. So I lay down there in the centre of the sacred place and offered the (sacred) pipe again. Then I drew the bison robe over me and waited. All around me growled and roared the voices, and the hail was like the drums of many giants beating while the giants sang: "Hey-a-hey!"

No hail fell there in the sacred circle where I lay, nor any rain. And when the storm was passed, I raised my robe and listened; and in the stillness I could hear the rain flood singing in the gulches all around me in the darkness, and far away to eastward there were dying voices calling: "Hey-a-hey!"

The night was old by now, and soon I fell asleep. And as I slept I saw my people sitting sad and troubled all around a sacred *tipi*, and there were many who were sick. And as I looked on them and wept, a strange light leaped upward from the ground close by – a light of many colours, sparkling, with rays that touched the heavens. Then it

was gone, and in the place from whence it sprang a herb was growing and I saw the leaves it had. And as I was looking at the herb so that I might not forget it, there was a voice that woke me, and it said: "Make haste! Your people need you!"

I looked and saw the east was just beginning to turn white. Standing up, I faced the young light and began to mourn again and pray. Then the daybreak star came slowly, very beautiful and still; and all around it there were clouds of baby faces smiling at me, the faces of the people not yet born. The stars about them now were beautiful with many colours, and beneath these there were heads of men and women moving around, and birds were singing somewhere yonder, and there were horses nickering and blowing as they do when they are happy, and somewhere deer were whistling and there were bison mooing too. What I could not see of this, I heard.

I think I fell asleep again, for after a while I was startled by a voice that said: "Get up, I have come after you!" I looked to see a spirit, but it was the good old man, Few Tails, standing over me. And now the sun was rising.

So we brought the sacred pipe back home and I went into the sweat lodge after offering the pipe to the six powers. When I was purified again, some very old men who were good and wise asked me to tell them what I had heard and seen. So after offering and smoking the sacred pipe again, I told it all to them, and they said that I must perform the dog vision on earth to help the people, and because the people were discouraged and sad, I should do this with *heyokas*, who are sacred fools, doing everything wrong or backwards to make the people laugh. They said they did not know but I would be a great man, because not many men were called to see such visions. I must wait twenty days, they said, and then perform my duty. So I waited.

Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks, BES pp.181–87

Leonard Crow Dog (b.1942), a Sicangu Lakota medicine man and spiritual leader also describes his early vision quest. Again, the same kind of cultural images are prevalent:

At thirteen I went to the sweat lodge, the *initipi*, and had my first grown-up sweat. For four times a day for four days I did it. I came out very light-headed and I told my mother, "Mom, somebody spoke to me. They talked to me. They told me to prepare a place to communicate with them." So my mother said, "Son, that's sacred. You're going where, a long time ago, your grandfather was. You are going into manhood now. You've got to do what your voices tell you."

At about that time I also went on my first *hanbleceya*, my first vision quest. I stayed on our vision hill for four days and nights. I

neither ate nor drank. A big shadow again stood behind me. On the third day he spoke to me: "I am the life of the generation, and I am the tree. I am the medicine, I am the things you experience. I will always speak to you. I will give you an altar. When you put up this altar, you must remember me. You must use the pipe and the four winds of the earth. So this is the message I am carrying to you. From now on you will be an interpreter for your people. Open your heart to them. Your grandfather is speaking to you now. I will be with you, and my spiritual words will grow inside you. That is the message."

From the age of twelve to eighteen that spirit power continued. A voice kept on saying, "My name is Sitting Rock. This is your Indian altar I am giving you. You will speak to each other through the eagle and you will speak to the eagle. Now you have come far enough to handle the two centre feathers. I am Flying Eagle. I will interpret for you."

At the age of twenty-four I went on another vision quest and again a spirit man spoke to me: "I am Stand on the Earth Man. I have been chosen to teach you medicine. To give you herb power. That's why I am here."

At the age of twenty-nine, I went crying for a dream once more and again the spirit talked to me: "I am Lightning Man. I am speaking to you within the lightning power of the spirit. So that's the power I am giving to you, a new understanding." When I heard this my hair stood up, and I heard a sound like knocking two flintstones together.

Leonard Crow Dog, Four Generations of Sioux Holy Men, FGSM pp.73–74

Visions such as these can only be taken at face value. Clearly they have a symbolic meaning and are drawn from the rich cultural imagery of those who experience them. The same has been true of biblical prophets and visionaries, such as Ezekiel¹ and John the author of the *Book of Revelation*,² and many other mystics. As numerous philosophers and wise men have pointed out, the mind has many dimensions, of which ordinary human beings are aware of only a tiny fraction.

See also: **sweat lodge, visioning, visions and dreams (Native North American)** (8.1).

1. *Ezekiel* 1:1–3:27, 4:1–22:27, 25:1–32:32, 33:1–48:35.

2. *Book of Revelation* 1:1–3.

visualization in Buddhism The creation of an imaginary mental image upon which to focus and contemplate in order to purify, concentrate, and still the mind; a meditation technique taking various forms that is practised in all the major Buddhist traditions – *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Tantrayāna*.

In *Theravāda*, a variety of objects and subjects (Pa. *kammaṭṭhāna*) are used to create a focus for reflection, meditation, and contemplation. Forty such *kammaṭṭhānas* are listed in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, where they are classified as ten physical objects (*kaṣiṇa*); ten foul, repulsive or loathsome (*asubha*) objects; ten recollections or mindfulnesses (*anussati*); four sublime abodes or immeasurable states (*brahmavihāra*), viz. lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), happiness over the welfare of others (*muditā*), and evenness of mind (*upekkhā*); the four immaterial spheres (*arūpāyatana*) of *arūpaloka* (formless world); reflection on the repulsive nature of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*); and analysis of the four elements (*catu-dhātu-vavatthāna*).¹

Generally speaking, these practices follow a similar pattern in which the meditator visualizes an internal image (*nimitta*) of the *kammaṭṭhāna*. As concentration deepens, the *nimitta* passes through a sequence of stages of *samādhi* (degrees of concentration), leading to entry into the first *jhāna* (stage of contemplation). Although it is easier to understand the forming of a mental image of an external object, the techniques used also lead to the formation of a *nimitta* of the more abstract *kammaṭṭhānas*.

Mahāyāna practices, building upon this basic pattern, include the visualization of deities, celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* and their associated heavenly or pure land realms such as the *abhirati* of Buddha Akshobhya ('Immovable One') or the *sukhāvatī* of Buddha Amitābha ('Boundless Light') or Amitāyus ('Boundless Life'), replete with ornate thrones, bejewelled palaces, and so forth. Visualizations in the Pure Land schools are practised to purify the mind and to ensure rebirth in those celestial realms after death.

Tantric practices, influenced by Indian yogic and tantric schools, include elaborate visualization of a variety of deities (T. *yi dams*), celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, *mantras*, *bīja-mantras*, *maṇḍalas*, *chakras*, lights, directing of the subtle *prāṇa* into its various channels (*nāḍīs*), and so on. Practitioners also visualize themselves as their chosen *yi dam*.

In the *Mahāyāna* Pure Land school, sixteen kinds of successive visualizations or contemplations are enumerated in the *Guān Wúliàngshòu Fó jīng* ('Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus *Sūtra*'), one of the three primary *sūtras* adopted by the Pure Land tradition. This *sūtra* relates a story concerning the Buddha's family, the royal family of Magadha. Devadatta, an envious cousin of the Buddha, wishing to take the Buddha's place as head of the *sangha* (community of disciples) provokes prince Ajātashatru into imprisoning his father King Bimbisāra and his mother Queen Vaidehī. In her suffering, Vaidehī calls upon the Buddha to enable her to be reborn in a land where there is no hatred or violence. Immediately aware of her plea by his divine power, he sends two of his disciples to visit her, later appearing personally to her in a vision. Through his power, the Buddha enables Vaidehī to visualize the various pure lands in which she could be reborn. To his delight, she chooses *sukhāvatī*, the pure land of Amitāyus. Says Vaidehī:

“I beseech you, World-Honoured One, to reveal to me a land of no sorrow and no affliction where I can be reborn. I do not wish to live in this defiled and evil world of *Jambudvīpa* where there are hells, realms of hungry ghosts, animals, and many vile beings. I wish that in the future I shall not hear evil words or see wicked people. World-Honoured One, I now kneel down to repent and beg you to take pity on me. I entreat you, O sunlike Buddha, to teach me how to visualize a land of pure karmic perfection.”

Then the World-Honoured One sent forth from between his eyebrows (*méijiān*) a flood of light (*guāng*) that was the colour of gold and illuminated the innumerable worlds in the ten directions. Returning to the Buddha, the light settled on his head and transformed itself into a golden platform resembling Mount Sumeru. On the platform appeared the pure and resplendent lands of all the *buddhas* in the ten directions. Some of these lands were made of the seven kinds of jewels, some solely of lotus flowers; some resembled the palace in the heaven of *paranirmita-vashavartin* (‘constant enjoyment of manifestations provided by others’), while some were like a crystal mirror in which all the lands in the ten directions were reflected. Innumerable *buddha*-lands like these, glorious and beautiful, were displayed to her.

Vaidehī then said to the Buddha, “O World-Honoured One, these *buddha*-lands are pure and free of defilement, and all of them are resplendent. But I wish to be born in the land of utmost bliss (*i.e.* *sukhāvatī*) of Amitāyus. I beseech you, World-Honoured One, to teach me how to contemplate that land and attain *samādhi*.”

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 5, T12 365:341b, TPSN p.67

For the benefit of others, the Buddha then reveals the Pure Land Way, teaching a sequence of contemplations on Amitāyus Buddha that will enable future generations to be reborn in *sukhāvatī*.² First, he speaks of the outer life to be followed:

The World-Honoured One smiled, and from his mouth came five-coloured rays of light, each shining on King Bimbisāra’s head. Although the old king was confined, with his unhindered mind’s eye (*xīnyǎn*) he saw the World-Honoured One in the distance. He knelt down in homage to the Buddha and effortlessly made spiritual progress until he reached the stage of non-returner (*S. anāgāmi*).

Then the World-Honoured One said to Vaidehī, “Do you know that Amitāyus is not far away? Fix your thoughts upon and contemplate that *buddha*-land. . . . I shall describe it to you in detail with various illustrations, so that all ordinary people in the future who wish to practise pure *karma* may also be born in that western land of utmost bliss. Whoever wishes to be born there should practise the three acts: first, caring for one’s parents, attending to one’s teachers and elders, compassionately refraining from killing, and doing the ten good deeds;

second, taking the three refuges (in the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *saṃgha*), keeping the various precepts, and refraining from breaking the rules of conduct; and third, awakening aspiration for enlightenment (*bodhichitta*), believing deeply in the law of causality, chanting the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, and encouraging people to follow their teachings. These three are called pure *karma* (actions)."

The Buddha further said to Vaidehī, "Do you know that these three acts are the pure *karma* practised by all the *buddhas* of the past, present and future as the right cause of enlightenment?"

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 6–7, T12 365:341c, TPSN pp.67–68

After further preamble, the Buddha then provides some instruction concerning the practice:

The Buddha said to Vaidehī, "You and other sentient beings should concentrate and, with one-pointed attention, turn your thoughts westward. How do you contemplate? All sentient beings except those born blind – that is, all those with the faculty of sight – should look at the setting sun. Sit in the proper posture, facing west. Clearly gaze at the sun, with mind firmly fixed on it; concentrate your sight and do not let it wander from the setting sun, which is like a drum suspended above the horizon. Having done so, you should then be able to visualize it clearly, whether your eyes are open or closed. This is the visualization (*xiǎng*) of the sun and is known as the first contemplation (*guān*). To practise in this way is called the correct contemplation (*guān*), and to practise otherwise is incorrect."

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 9, T12 365:341c–342a, TPSN p.69

The Buddha continues by describing further visualizations of the landscape of *sukhāvatī*:

The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī, "After you have accomplished the first contemplation, next practise the visualization of water. Envision the western direction as entirely flooded by water. Then picture the water as clear and pure, and let this vision be distinctly perceived. Keep your thoughts from being distracted. After you have visualized the water, envision it becoming frozen. After you have visualized the ice as transparent to its depth, see it turning into beryl. When you have attained this vision, next imagine that the beryl ground shines brilliantly, inside and out, and that this ground is supported from below by columns that are made of diamond and the seven kinds of jewels and hung with golden banners. These columns have eight sides and eight corners, each side being adorned with a hundred kinds of jewels. Each jewel emits a thousand rays of light, each ray in turn

having eighty-four thousand colours. As they are reflected on the beryl ground, they look like a thousand *koṭis* (ten millions) of suns, so dazzling that it is impossible to see them in detail.

“On this beryl ground, golden paths intercross like a net of cords. The land is divided into areas made of one or the other of the seven jewels, so the partitions are quite distinct. Each jewel emits a flood of light in five hundred colours. The light appears in the shape of a flower or a star or the moon; suspended in the sky, it turns into a platform of light on which there are ten million pavilions made of a hundred kinds of jewels. Both sides of this platform are adorned with a hundred *koṭis* of flowered banners and innumerable musical instruments. As eight pure breezes arise from the light and play the musical instruments, they proclaim the truths of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and no-self. This is the visualization (*xiǎng*) of the water and is known as the second contemplation (*guān*).”

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 10, T12 365:342a, TPSN p.69

The third contemplation is the same visualization, but in a state of *samādhi*. The fourth is visualization of gloriously adorned and bejewelled trees:

Each blossom and leaf has the colours of various jewels. From the beryl-coloured blossoms and leaves issues forth a golden light... Splendid nets of pearls cover the trees. Between these seven rows of nets covering each tree there are five hundred *koṭis* of palaces adorned with exquisite flowers, like the palace of the *Brahmā* king, where celestial children naturally dwell.

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 12, T12 365:342b, TPSN p.70

The fifth contemplation is that of the water of the lakes of *sukhāvatī*, which possess “eight excellent qualities”; the sixth is visualization of myriads of ornately bejewelled towers; and the seventh is that of the “lotus throne” of Amitāyus, “decorated with eighty-thousand diamonds, ... and also with exquisite pearl nets” – all described in an exotic and extravagant manner.

The eighth contemplation consists of visualization of images of Amitāyus and his two attendant *bodhisattvas*, Avalokiteshvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, which is known as the *samādhi* of mindfulness of the Buddha (C. *niànfó*, J. *nembutsu*). The ninth is contemplation of Amitāyus himself, which automatically confers the vision of all the *buddhas* and complete mindfulness of the Buddha Amitāyus. The tenth to the thirteenth contemplations are visions of the *bodhisattvas* Avalokiteshvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta themselves; contemplation of the meditator himself being reborn in *sukhāvatī*; and finally, contemplation of the images of Amitāyus and his two attendant *bodhisattvas* as pervading everywhere in *sukhāvatī*.

The next three contemplations concern the rebirth of those of the highest, the middle and lowest degrees of spiritual realization, which effectively covers all of humanity, grouped according to how well they follow the *Dharma*. Each of these three groups is subdivided into three, making nine subgroups in all. The fate after death of these nine groups is then described. Those of the “highest level of the highest grade” are met by “Amitāyus together with Avalokiteshvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, innumerable transformed *buddhas*, a great assembly of a hundred thousand monks and *shrāvakas* (‘hearers’, lay followers), and innumerable *devas* in seven-jewelled palaces.” They are those who have led pure lives and have assiduously followed and practised the *Dharma*. They are reborn in *sukhāvatī* “in the time it takes to snap one’s fingers”. The “lowest level of the lowest grade”, on the other hand, are those who have led evil lives, committing all kinds of evil and immoral deeds:

Owing to such evil *karma*, a fool like this will fall into evil realms and suffer endless agony for many *kalpas* (aeons). When he is about to die, he may meet a good teacher, who consoles him in various ways, teaching him the wonderful *Dharma* and urging him to be mindful of the Buddha (Amitāyus); but he is too tormented by pain to do so. The good teacher then advises him, “If you cannot concentrate on the Buddha, then you should say instead, ‘Homage to Amitāyus Buddha (C. Guīmìng Wúliàngshòu Fó)’.” In this way, he sincerely and continuously says, ‘Homage to Amitāyus Buddha’ ten times. Because he calls the Buddha’s name, with each repetition the evil *karma* that would bind him to birth and death for eighty *koṭis* of *kalpas* is extinguished.

When he comes to die, he sees before him a golden lotus flower like the disc of the sun, and in an instant he is born within a lotus bud in the land of utmost bliss (*sukhāvatī*). After twelve great *kalpas*, the lotus bud opens. When the flower opens, Avalokiteshvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta teach him with voices of great compassion the method of extinguishing evil *karma* through the realization of the Suchness of all *dharma*s (teachings). Hearing this, he rejoices and immediately awakens aspiration for enlightenment. Such a person is called ‘one who attains birth on the lowest level of the lowest grade’. These three (contemplations) together are known as the visualization (*xiǎng*) of the lowest grade of aspirants and the sixteenth contemplation (*guān*).

Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra 30, T12 365:346a, TPSN p.85

So even for the worst of sinners, according to this *sūtra*, salvation is deemed possible if a person can repeat the *nembutsu* only “ten times”. Those who fall into the intermediate stages meet with an appropriately intermediate fate after death, are met by Amitāyus and/or some of his various attendants after varying periods, and reach enlightenment after shorter or longer timespans.

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra**, **kaśīṇa**, **mahāmudrā**, **nembutsu**, **nimitta**, **samādhi** (8.1), **Vajrayāna** (►4), **zhǐguān**.

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3–11, *PTSV* pp.84–372.
2. *Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra* 9–30, *T12* 365:341c–346a, *TPSN* pp.69–86.

vivattānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of turning away (*vivatta*) from the cycle of birth and death. See **anupassanā**.

vocal prayer Prayer that is spoken aloud; a practice common to all religions. In Christianity, vocal prayer appears to have been prevalent from early times, and has been accepted in all branches of the Church. It is justified on the grounds that God created both body and soul, and He is therefore pleased when both act in unison. It is said that the inner attitude should be the same in both vocal as well as silent prayer. The two main dissenters in the Christian tradition have been John Wycliffe and his followers, and the Quietists. John Wycliffe regarded all vocal prayer except the Lord’s prayer (the *Paternoster*) as unnecessary, since God knows everything – material needs as well as the state of the soul. Moreover, he believed that prayer is a spiritual practice and needs to be performed by the soul, not the body. The Quietists, who surrendered entirely to God, considered the external action of vocal prayer to be a disturbance to the stillness of soul required for true prayer.

Angela of Foligno follows a common division of prayer into vocal (“corporeal”), mental, and supernatural (contemplative) prayer. She practises vocal prayer, she says, because it helps her to stay awake and leads to mental prayer:

Corporeal prayer is that which is always accompanied by the sound of words and by bodily exercises, such as kneeling down, asking pardon, and bowing oneself. This kind I do continually perform, and the reason for it is that, desiring to exercise myself in mental prayer, I was sometimes deceived and hindered from doing so by idleness and sleep, and thus lost time. This is why I exercise myself in corporeal prayer, and this corporeal prayer leads me to the mental. But this must be done very attentively. Therefore, when you say the *Paternoster*, you must carefully consider what you are saying, and not repeat it in haste in order to say it a certain number of times, as do those vain women who perform good deeds for a reward.

Angela of Foligno, Book of Divine Consolation 2:20; cf. *BDC* p.99

As she intimates, vocal prayer can inculcate a feeling of inner devotion, which leads to mental prayer. In fact, Walter Hilton comments:

It sometimes happens that grace puts an end to vocal prayer, and calls on the soul to see and experience God in a different way.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:43, LPH p.240

For personal prayers, François de Sales advises expression of the heart, rather than the repetition of set prayers. This helps to make the prayer sincere and inward, rather than mechanical:

There are many collections of short vocal prayers which may be useful, but if you take my advice you will not restrict yourself to any set form of words; rather say aloud or in your heart whatever love suggests to you at the time, for it will inspire you with all you desire. It is true that certain words are especially satisfying to the heart, such as the aspirations found so abundantly in the *Psalms*, or the various invocations of the name of Jesus, or the expressions of love in the *Canticle of Canticles*; hymns are also very useful, so long as they are sung devoutly.

François de Sales, Devout Life 2:13, IDL p.68

Teresa of Ávila recommends reading some passages from a book to help generate a devotional feeling before starting either vocal or more inward forms of prayer. It helps to focus the mind:

It is also a great help to have a good book, written in the vernacular, simply as an aid to recollection. With this aid you will learn to say your vocal prayers well – I mean, as they ought to be said – and little by little, persuasively and methodically, you will get your soul used to this, so that it will no longer be afraid of it. Remember that many years have passed since it left its Spouse, and it needs very careful handling before it can return home.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 26; cf. CWTA2 pp.109–10

She also believes that vocal prayer remains of value, even for those who have developed their inner life:

In case you should think there is little gain to be derived from practising vocal prayer perfectly, I must tell you that, while you are repeating the *Paternoster* or some other vocal prayer, it is quite possible for the Lord to grant you perfect contemplation.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 25, CWTA2 p.104

In fact, vocal prayer should include mental prayer, otherwise the lips speak, but the mind is out woolgathering:

Whether or not you are practising mental prayer has nothing to do with keeping the lips closed. If, while I am speaking with God and praying

vocally, I have a clear realization and full consciousness that I am doing so, and if this is more real to me than the words I am uttering, then I am combining mental and vocal prayer. When people tell you that you are speaking with God by reciting the *Paternoster* and thinking of worldly things – well, words fail me.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 22, CWTA2 p.93

On the other hand, since the mind rebels against interior recollection, there are those who confine themselves to vocal prayer, thinking it to be sufficient:

There are impatient people who dislike giving themselves trouble, and it is troublesome at first to practise recollection of the mind when one has not made it a habit. So, in order not to make themselves the least bit tired, they say they are incapable of anything but vocal prayer and do not know how to do anything further.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 24, CWTA2 p.103

Such people are often fearful of even thinking about inner prayer:

Let us now return to speak of those souls I have mentioned who cannot practise recollection, or tie down their minds to mental prayer, or make a meditation. We must not talk to them of either of those two things – they will not hear of them; as a matter of fact, there are a great many people who seem terrified at the very name of contemplation or mental prayer.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 24, CWTA2 pp.100–1

St Teresa is referring to her own times, in which mental prayer and contemplation were frequently regarded as suspect by the Inquisition. As a result, contemplatives often received misleading advice from their spiritual directors. She therefore counsels:

Cease troubling about these fears, then, sisters; and never pay heed to such matters of popular opinion. This is no time for believing everyone; believe only those whom you see modelling their lives on the life of Christ. Endeavour always to have a good conscience; practise humility; despise all worldly things; and believe firmly in the teaching of our Holy Mother, the Church. You may then be quite sure that you are on a good road. Cease, as I have said, to be afraid where there is nothing to fear; and if anyone tries to frighten you, point out the road to him in all humility. Tell him that you have a rule that commands you, as it does, to pray without ceasing, and that you must keep that rule.

If they tell you that you should practise only vocal prayer, ask them whether your mind and heart ought not to be in what you say. If they answer, “Yes” – and they cannot do otherwise – you see they

are admitting that you are bound to practise mental prayer, and even contemplation, if God should grant it to you.

Teresa of Ávila, Way of Perfection 21; cf. CWTA2 pp.92–93

See also: **mental prayer, prayer, supernatural prayer** (8.1).

whakawetewete (Mo) *Lit.* to cause (*whaka*) to untie or unravel (*wetewete*); to release, to set free; to let go, to loosen, to detach; hence relaxation and meditation techniques practised to free the mind from the body.

According to Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand's South Island, the Māori *tohunga* (priestly adepts) practised meditation to develop balance and spiritual consciousness, to open the door to inner *mana* (power), to access the *kete* or baskets of inner spiritual knowledge, and to ascend to the presence of *Io* the Most Supreme. *Whakawetewete* are relaxation, deep thinking, concentration and meditation techniques practised to loosen consciousness from the bonds of the physical, freeing it to rise “to acknowledge *Io* as the highest being”:

Wetewete means ‘to loosen’ or ‘set free’ and is one of the old names for a series of meditation exercises. Their purpose was to enable you to rise above the world and the elements, to let go of your surroundings and to find the peace of *Rongo* (god of peace, also of agriculture). . . .

To set yourself free of the physical world is to acknowledge *Io* as the highest being. This is very positive. We rise above the elements and the lesser *atua* (ancestor deities) and above this earthly domain. The *akoako* (disciple, student) was told to do this often so that his personal balance would remain intact. Gradually, the exercises would take the *tohunga* far up to the higher realm of *Io* just as *Tāne* (the god who brought knowledge to mankind) obtained the baskets of knowledge.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.104

Speaking of inner ascent through the chanting of *karakia* (incantations), Robinson adds:

The *tohunga* ascends the macrocosm by *karakia* and contacts the higher powers by naming the *atua*, ancestors or Hawaiiki (Hawaii, ancestral material and spiritual homeland) in his rites. At any time when we call on the aid of the *wairua* (spirit), we ascend the macrocosm. Our minds transcend our mundane level and reach out towards superior powers that are beyond our reckoning. Then, when we apply this *karakia* to the physical level, such as when calling *Rangi* (Sky Father) to bless a child, the heavenly powers are brought down into our level in *te ao mārama* (world of life and light, this world). . . .

To join the *karakia* to Hawaiki, the prayer has the added *mana* (power) of the source. The prayers become empowered by ancestral *mana*. Instead of having our individual power, the Māori has the power of everyone before him in his *whakapapa* (genealogy). Because Hawaiki is ancient, when we address its name in prayer we find power. Hawaiki becomes more than a place of power. It enters into all of the various prayers of the *tohunga* and by invoking it we also transcend time. We travel back to the power of the ancient Māori.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.109

See also: **karakia** (8.4), **tohunga** (7.1).

wiwanyag wachipi (Lakota) *Lit.* sun (*wiwanyag*) dance (*wachipi*); dancing in the sun; an annual event intended to engender a link with spiritual beings and the Great Spirit; a ceremony that reinforces understanding of expression, “all my relations (*mitakuye oyasin*)”, which means that all creatures and all things are related, that no one should kill or be killed, and that all should express gratitude for the gift of life. See **sun dance**.

xiángxīn (C) to control (*xiáng*) the mind (*xīn*); to control, conquer, subdue, or tame the mind; in Daoism, to bring the mind under control rather than to let it run wild.

Master Wáng Zhé (C12th) describes the difference between a controlled and an uncontrolled mind:

Let me explain the way (*dào*) of the mind (*xīn*). If the mind is always deep and tranquil, it will remain unmoving (*bùdòng*). In deep and silent abstruseness (*hūnhūn mò mò*), it will pay no attention to the myriad things (*wànwù*). In deep and impenetrable profundity (*míngmíng yǎoyǎo*), it will distinguish neither inside nor outside. Not even the slightest trace of thought will remain. This is a focused mind. It needs no controlling (*xiáng*).

On the other hand, if the mind actively goes in pursuit of mental projections, it will become all topsy-turvy, searching for the head and finding the tail. This is a chaotic mind. You must cut it out and thoroughly eliminate it. Never let it run wild. It will ruin and destroy the *Dào* and Its virtue. It will harm and diminish your (true) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*).

Standing, walking, sitting, or lying down – if the mind is constantly controlled (*xiáng*), then hearing and seeing, knowing and perceiving will be its only sickness and affliction.

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng lǐjiào shíwǔ lùn 8, JY190 3b–4a, DZ1233;

cf. TEAK p.90, HDP8 p.39

Control of the mind is a constant theme in Daoist literature. In his *Vegetable Roots Discourses*, master Hóng Zichéng (C16th) insists that it is necessary to control the mind in order to banish “perversities” and “reckless tendencies”:

To conquer (*xiáng*) your demons, you must first conquer (*xiáng*) perversities in your own mind (*xīn*). Once you have done that, the demons will cower and be at your command. To rein in reckless tendencies, you must control (*yù*) the impulses that lead to such tendencies. Once your mind is tranquil and your life energy (*qì*) harmonious, elements from outside will no longer be able to disturb you.

Hóng Zichéng, Càigēntán 38, CGT; cf. TRW p.38

In the influential *One-Hundred-Character Tablet* attributed to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE), the opening stanza teaches practitioners to:

Nurture your *qì* (subtle life energy) in silence;
Control your mind (*xiángxīn*)
and practise *wúwéi* (non-action, unforced and selfless action).
Then, whether active or still,
you will be aware of your primordial Ancestor (*zōngzǔ*).

Lǚ Dòngbīn, Bǎizì bēi, in *Lǚzǔ zhì*, DZ1484 6:2b

In his commentary on this stanza, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says that control of the mind requires differentiating between the “human mind (*rénxīn*) and the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*)”:

The exercise of self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) begins with controlling the mind (*xiángxīn*). But to control the mind (*xiángxīn*), it is necessary to know the mind. There is a difference between the human mind (*rénxīn*) and the mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*), a difference between the true mind (*zhēnxīn*) and the false mind (*jiǎxīn*).

The mind of *Dào* (*dàoxīn*) is the original (*běnlái*): it neither recognizes nor discriminates (perceives no duality); it yields to the laws of the Emperor (*dì*, i.e. the *Dào*). The human mind (*rénxīn*) is the false mind: it acquires knowledge, discrimination (between things), the seven passions, and the six desires.

The true mind benefits one’s (true) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*); the false mind harms one’s (true) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*).

To control the mind (*xiángxīn*) means to control what is false in the human mind (*rénxīn*). But to control the human mind (*xiáng rén xīn*) is not to fill the mind or to empty the mind; nor is it to still the mind forcefully. It must follow its natural course. As it is said in *Awakening*

to Reality, the magic secret of controlling the mind (*xiángxīn*) is to “go along with desires, and guide them gradually”.¹

So the text says, “To control the mind (*xiángxīn*), act without action (*wéi bùwéi*).” ‘Act’ means that the mind must be controlled (*xiáng*). ‘Without action’ means to control (*xiáng*) the mind, but not by force. Control (*xiáng*) the mind without the act of controlling (*bùxiáng*); the mind is controlled (*xiáng*) without being (forcibly) controlled (*bùxiáng*). It is simply a matter of applying oneself without (forced) application, of making an ‘effort’ (to be still), when (in reality) no effort is needed.

This is because the accumulated habits of the wayward and conceited human mind have become second nature. . . . Restraining it too hastily is using the mind to control the mind. This generates more mind energy, which fosters the nature of habits and results in mental illness. This is what the *Scripture on Yin Convergence*² means when it says, “When fire is generated from wood, disaster eventuates, which has to be controlled.”

Therefore, to control the mind (*xiángxīn*) effectively, it is necessary to practise progressive cultivation. The exercise of progressive cultivation does not harm anyone else, but benefits oneself by the action (*wéi*) of non-action (*bùwéi*).

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

An uncontrolled mind, says master Liú Yīmíng, leads to confusion, instability, and depletion of energy and willpower. The primary method of controlling the mind is by spiritual practice, which leads to awareness of the *Dào* within:

The elixir (*dān*, i.e. innate spiritual awareness) will be completed after attending to the inner work for some time. The important thing is to restore the elixir (*huándān*). This is dependent upon the return of *qì* (life energy); the return of *qì* is determined by stabilization of one’s (true) nature (*xìng*); stabilizing one’s (true) nature (*xìng*) lies in not getting confused; not getting confused rests with controlling the mind (*xiángxīn*); and the key to controlling the mind is to know your primordial Ancestor (*zōngzǔ*).

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

When the adept becomes aware of the presence of the *Dào* (the “primordial Ancestor”) many things happen automatically, including a resumption of power over the mind, and the clarity of thought that arises from vanquishing it:

Having attained awareness of the primordial Ancestor (*zōngzǔ*), one’s mind is tamed (*xiángxīn*) and one accepts things without being captivated by them. One’s (true) nature automatically becomes steady, *qì* automatically returns, and the elixir (*dān*) automatically manifests.

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

Another commentary on the same text, attributed to master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th), points out that a primary factor in the lack of mind control is the sense of sight, because, of all the senses, it is through this sense that the majority of impressions are received. Reducing visual impressions by closing the eyes, one can then work on controlling the mind:

The minds (*xīn*) of worldly people are endlessly tumultuous. To still (*jìng*) the mind, it is important that practitioners control their eyes; for the eyes are the doors to the mind. So you must lower the eyelids and shut the mouth.

Use the mind like a sword against all things. Think, “Worldly things are of no benefit to me.” Then the raging fire will instantly disappear: greed and attachment will be ended and removed.

A saying goes: “... keep mind (*xīn*) and breath (*xī*) together, keep the attention on the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*, inner centre), and you can subdue (*xiángfú*) thought.”

Zhù Lǚzǐ Bǎizì bēi, in *Xuánjī zhǐjiǎng*, in *Zhāng Sānfēng xiānshēng quánjì*,
JY236 7:25b, ZW125

See also: **liànxīn, shōuxīn, xīnzhāi, xiūxīn, zhìxīn.**

1. Zhāng Bóduān, *Wùzhēn piān*, DZ141.
2. *Yīnfú jīng*, DZ31.

xiánshì, jìngshè, jìngshì (C) *Lit.* leisure (*xián*) room (*shì*); quiet (*jìng*) room (*shì*); a meditation room, a still or calm room or chamber; a still or quiet cottage, shed, or hut (*shè*); a chamber or cottage of quiescence, an oratory; a room or small hut used for meditation; a room or small building used exclusively for meditation. *Jìngshè* is used synonymously with *qīngshè*.

What does seclusion mean? It means withdrawing deep into a chamber of quiescence (*jìngshì*).

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Tiānyīnzǐ 5, DZ1026 1:39b, JY158, HDP2 p.29

Such rooms were also used for the ritual petitioning of spirits, with various rituals and taboos sometimes associated with their entry. Persons deemed ritually unclean due to childbirth or through contact with the dead, for example, were not permitted in the vicinity.¹

The anonymous *Records of Cultivating Nature and Extending Life* (C8th) recommends using a special room for meditation and physical and breathing exercises. Together with a therapeutic diet, this was believed to assure the practitioner a long life:

If one could let the mind (*xīn*) roam in emptiness and stillness, cease thought and not act (*wúwéi*), absorb the primordial Energy (*yuánqì*) in the early morning, regularly practise *dǎoyǐn* (a form of callisthenics) in one's meditation chamber (*xiánshì*), nurture and accumulate spiritual life without loss, and take a variety of fine herbs – then, living to the advanced age of a hundred would be a common allotment.

Yǎngxìng yánmíng lù, DZ838; cf. CNEL pp.64–65

In *Veritable Truth*, master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) says that it is important to establish a quiet room in which to meditate:

First, build a quiet room (*jìngshì*). The quiet room (*jìngshì*) does not have to be in the mountains or in the woods. It can be in a household – in a town or in the countryside. So long as it is used for that purpose, it can be anywhere.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Jiǎng Wéiqiáo (C20th) repeats this requirement when he describes how to prepare for Daoist meditation:

Meditation should be practised in a quiet place (*jìngshì*) or in the bedroom, the door of which should be closed to avoid interruption from outside; but its windows should be wide open (to let in fresh air).

Jiǎng Wéiqiáo, Yīnshìzǐ jìngzuò yǎngshēngfǔ, YJYS; cf. in SCML p.167

Master Jiǎng Wéiqiáo also describes how he eventually conquered illness, not with medicinal preparations but by withdrawing from the world to his meditation room, where he passed his time in deep meditation:

I took Chinese medicine, but my illness turned serious and continued for three months. I was frightened that I might soon follow my deceased brother. So I threw away all my medicines, separated from my family, remained in a quiet room (*jìngshì*), retired from the world, remained indifferent to everything, and resumed my practice of meditation.

Jiǎng Wéiqiáo, Yīnshìzǐ jìngzuò yǎngshēngfǔ, YJYS; cf. in SCML p.176

See also: **huándǔ**.

1. See Peter Nickerson, “The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints,” in *EDSB* pp.232, 251 (n.4).

xīnzhāi (C) *Lit.* fasting (*zhāi*) of the mind (*xīn*); a Daoist meditation technique. While physical fasting involves limiting the intake of food and drink in order to

cleanse the physical body, *xīnzhāi* refers to emptying the mind of all thoughts, attachments and desires, and cleansing it in order to increase one's degree of spiritual awareness and become fit to merge with the *Dào*.

The *Zhuāngzǐ* (C3rd BCE) recounts a dialogue between Confucius (Kǒngfūzǐ) and his disciple Yán Huí, who had sought his master's blessing before travelling to another state in order to offer unsolicited advice to its tyrannical ruler. Confucius advises Yán Huí that he is still narrow-minded, entertaining rigid opinions. When Yán Huí asks his master for a method to correct his failings, Confucius urges him to fast:

It is fasting (*zhāi*), as I will tell you. But when you have the method, will you find it easy to practise it? He who thinks it easy will be disapproved of by bright heaven.

Zhuāngzǐ 4, *TTI* p.208

Yán Huí responds that he is familiar with fasting:

“My family is poor. For months together we have had no spirituous liquor, nor do we taste proscribed food or any strong-smelling vegetables; can this be regarded as fasting (*zhāi*)?”

The reply was, “That is the fasting (*zhāi*) appropriate to sacrificing (*jìsì*), not the fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*).”

“I venture to ask what that fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*) is,” said Huí.

Zhuāngzǐ 4; cf. *TTI* pp.208–9

Confucius responds that real fasting is to empty the mind and listen within, thereby freeing the mind from all preconceptions:

Confucius answered: “Maintain perfect unity in every movement of your will. Do not wait for the hearing of your ears concerning something, but for the hearing of your mind. Do not wait even for the hearing of your mind, but for the hearing of your spirit. Let the hearing (of the ears) remain with the ears. Let the mind remain in its discriminations, while the spirit stays free of all preoccupations, awaiting things as they happen. When everything is in its proper order, then there is freedom from all preoccupations. Such freedom is the fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*).”

Zhuāngzǐ 4; cf. *TTI* p.209

While explaining to Yán Huí how he can become more open and flexible in his dealings with people, and especially with the ruler whom he intends to advise, Confucius points to the benefit of *xīnzhāi*, explaining that it refers to emptying the mind (*xūxīn*) in order to attain a condition of openness in

attunement to the *Dào*. Having a receptive mind will result in the ability to offer balanced and objective advice. Yán Huí responds:

“Before I heard this, I was certain that I was Huí. But now that I have heard it, there is no more Huí. Can this be called emptiness?”

“That’s all there is to it,” said Confucius. “Now I will tell you: you may go and play in his (the king’s) bird cage, but never be moved by fame. If he listens, then sing; if not, keep quiet. Have no gate, no opening, but make Oneness your house, and live with what cannot be avoided. Then you will be close to success.”

Zhuāngzǐ 4, CTW p.58

To “make Oneness your house” means to make *Dào* the only focus; to “live with what cannot be avoided” means to go along with things without resistance, while remaining focused in the *Dào*. The master then exhorts Yán Huí to remain true to the *Dào*:

It is easy to cheat when you work for men, but hard to cheat when you work for heaven. . . . Look into that closed room, the empty chamber where brightness is born! Fortune and blessing gather where there is stillness.

Zhuāngzǐ 4, CTW p.58

Through persistent fasting of the mind, mental appetites diminish. The more the mind becomes clear and empty (“hollow”), the more it becomes receptive to the *Dào*. A short story from the *Book of Master Liè* illustrates how such a mind eventually becomes like that of a sage:

Lóng Shū said to Wén Zhì (a physician): “You are the master of subtle arts. I have a disease. Can you cure it, Sir?”

“I am at your service,” replied Wén Zhì. “But first, please let me know the symptoms of your disease.”

“I hold it no honour,” said Lóng Shū, “to be praised in my native village, nor do I consider it a disgrace to be decried in my native state. Gain excites in me no joy, and loss no sorrow. I look upon life in the same light as death, upon riches in the same light as poverty, upon my fellow men as so many swine, and upon myself as I look upon my fellow men. I dwell in my home as though it were a mere caravanserai, and regard my native district with no more feeling than I would a barbarian state. Afflicted as I am in these various ways, honours and rewards fail to rouse me, pains and penalties to overawe me, good or bad fortune to influence me, joy or grief to move me.

“Thus I am incapable of serving my sovereign, of associating with my friends and kinsmen, of directing my wife and children, or of

controlling my servants and retainers. What disease is this, and what remedy is there that will cure it?”

Wén Zhì replied by asking Lóng Shū to stand with his back to the light, while he himself faced the light and looked at him intently. “Ah!” said he after a while, “I see that a good square inch of your heart-mind (*xīn*) is hollow. You are within an ace of becoming a true sage. Six of the openings in your heart-mind (*xīn*) are open and clear, and only the seventh is blocked.

“This, however, is doubtless due to the fact that you are mistaking for a disease that which is really divine enlightenment. It is a case in which my shallow art is of no avail.”

Lièzǐ 4, DZ668; cf. *BLTG* pp.77–79

According to an ancient belief, a sage has seven openings in his heart, the heart (*xīn*) being understood as the seat of understanding,¹ and hence translated as ‘heart-mind’ or ‘mind’. Another belief has it that a worldly minded person has five openings, a good person seven, and a sage nine.²

Physical fasting reduces bodily pollution and restores innate physiological purity. In like manner, preventing thoughts and impressions concerning the outside world from arising in the mind, while keeping it focused at all times, results in the recovery of one’s innate stillness and purity, essential for merging with the *Dào*. A text from the corpus of revelations associated with the *Shàngqīng* school advises practitioners about the spiritual benefit of living carefully apart from the world, practising “fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*)”:

To guard the perfected, keep your mind (*xīn*) simple and your spirit (*shén*) concentrated. Remain in deep absorption and be receptive to the mystery. The hundred thoughts must not arise; your concentrated intention (*yì*) should not scatter. Then, with focused mind and unified spirit, a divine light will appear before you, and you will begin to roam freely along with it. This state is reached by keeping the thoughts focused and not letting them scatter, by pulling energy together and harmonizing it. This is the perfection that comes from simplicity. It is the swiftest path to the *Dào*! ...

Therefore, be conscientious! Practise fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*) and keep away from the world! Concentrate your mind hard and be without conscious plans! Even then you will still have to develop sensitivity for at least three months before you can actually face the One (*yǔyī jùmiàn*).

Jīnquē dìjūn sānyuán zhēnyī jīng, DZ253 2b; cf. *TEAK* pp.206–7

In later times, the notion of *xīnzhāi* developed in two principal directions: firstly, fasting and keeping the precepts (*zhāijiè*); and secondly, controlling or restraining the mind (*chíxīn*, *shōuxīn*, *zhìxīn*). In this context, *zhāi* included

not only fasting from food, but also purification practices and rites, and is used as a generic term for Daoist rituals.

The *Táng* dynasty (618–906) Daoist priest who compiled the *Record of Purgations and Precepts* – a collection of the codes of behaviour (*jiè*) required of Daoists participating in sacred ceremonies and purification rites (*zhāi*) – refers to fasting or purification of the mind as the third kind of *zhāi*:

There are three methods of fasting or abstinence (*zhāi*). The first is to make offerings that are free of meat and wine (*zhāi*) in order to accumulate merit and atone for transgressions.

The second is abstinence from meat and wine (*zhāi*) in one's diet in order to cleanse the mind and promote long life. This is the way of worship and sacred rituals, adopted by practitioners who follow the middle path.

The third is fasting of the mind (*xīnzhāi*) in order to clear, empty and extinguish the mind (*xīn*), to dispel habits, and to eliminate desire. It cleanses the spirit, purifies the mind, and removes the burden of worldly affairs. It nurtures wisdom and quells anxiety. When there are no thoughts or worries, the mind is devoted to the *Dào*. When there are neither indulgences nor desires, the mind is happy with the *Dào*. When there is no burden of worldly affairs, the mind is in union with the *Dào*.

Zhāijiè lù, DZ464

In his *Discussions on Cultivation of Reality*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) lists seven forms of fasting, of which the first six (of the body, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and will) are of an outer nature, while the seventh – that of fasting the mind's domain (*xīnjìng*) – is inner. He reminds his readers that the mind, while an “inner thief” if unrestrained, is nonetheless the “residence” of the spirit, and that the other six “roots” are “outer thieves” that “come and go”, despoiling the residence.³

See also: **meditation (Daoism)**, **xiángxīn**, **xūxīn**.

1. See Lionel Giles, *Taoist Teachings*, BLTG p.79.

2. See “xin,” *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ET2 p.1100.

3. Liú Yīmíng, *Xiūzhēn biànnán*, ZW260, DS6.

xiū (C) *Lit.* cultivation; in Daoism, spiritual cultivation, as in expressions such as *xiūdào* (cultivating the *Dào*), *xiūzhēn* (cultivating Truth), *xiūxīn* (cultivation of mind), and *xiūxíng* (cultivation practice, spiritual practice). *Xiū* can refer to self-improvement within any sphere of human endeavour – moral, mental, physical, or spiritual. In Daoism, *xiū* embraces practices that refine away mental and emotional dross and impurity, allowing the practitioner

to return to his primordial spiritual state and attain spiritual immortality. It also refers to cultivation of the physical body in order to promote health and longevity. See **xiūdào**, **xiūzhēn**.

xiūdào (C) *Lit.* to cultivate (*xiū*) the *Dào*; to study the *Dào*; Daoist cultivation; to practise Daoism; the commitment to become and remain aligned with and pervaded by the *Dào*.

In his treatise *Veritable Truth*, master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) explains that the human mind has become stained and veiled, conditioned by life on the physical plane. However, through various Daoist practices, this pollution can be removed, opening the way for return to one's spiritual root, the *Dào*:

The original (*yuán*) source (*běn*) of the entire mind (*xīntǐ*) is the *Dào*. But over time, the mind's attention (*xīnshén*) has become heavily soiled and veiled, and has wandered for so long that it has become separated from the *Dào*. Only by cleansing the mind (*xīn*) of its defilements can the essence of the spirit (*shénběn*) be known. This is called cultivation of *Dào* (*xiūdào*). Then, the mind no longer wanders. It remains absorbed in the *Dào*, merged with the *Dào*, and finds peace within the *Dào*.

This is called returning to the Root (*guīgēn*). Being with the Root, never separating from it, is called stillness. After keeping still for a long time, ailments disappear, and (spiritual) life returns – and continues to return and accumulate. Then you will automatically attain realization and constancy – realization that is veiled by nothing, and constancy that is changed by nothing. In fact, the eternity that transcends life and death arises from these.

In order to cultivate the Truth (*xiūzhēn*), you must first eliminate all distractions. Detach yourself from all external affairs so that there is nothing to disturb the mind. Then turn within to observe and rectify the mind's attention (*zhèngjué*). As soon as the attention (*jué*) runs out after a thought, stop it immediately. When it happens again, again stop it immediately – until it calms down.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) says that there are two options: to allow worldly pollution to become “thicker and wilder”, taking the individual ever further from the *Dào*, or to scrub away those defilements to make way for spiritual consciousness. He calls the latter option ‘cultivation of the *Dào* (*xiūdào*)’. It enables a return to the Source, to harmony with the *Dào*:

When one lets one's mind and spirit become defiled, if the obscuring overgrowth becomes thicker and wilder day by day, then one is moving away from the *Dào*. On the other hand, scrubbing away the

defilements of the mind, opening up consciousness of the root of the spirit is what we call ‘cultivation of the *Dào* (*xiūdào*)’. No more unsteady drifting – just mystical harmony with the *Dào*.

Resting quietly within the *Dào* is called ‘returning to the Root’. Guarding the Root and never leaving it is called ‘tranquillity and concentration’. When these increase daily, diseases are dispersed and (spiritual) life is recovered. Continuous recovery leads to spontaneous knowledge of the eternal. ‘Knowledge’ here means that nothing is left unclear; ‘eternal’ means that nothing changes or perishes anymore. In this way, an end to (the cycle of) birth and death is truly found.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 3, DZ1036 3a–b, JY213; cf. SSTK pp.88–89

Later, he likens agitation of the mind to irritation in the eyes:

The mind is like the eyes. When even a tiny speck of dust gets into them, they are no longer at rest. Likewise, when a minor affair concerns the mind, it automatically becomes agitated and confused; and once the disease of agitation is there, it is very difficult to enter a state of concentration. Therefore, the central point in cultivating the *Dào* lies in the extinction of such diseases. As long as they are not eradicated, any real concentration of mind remains impossible.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 3, DZ1036 4b–5a, JY213; cf. SSTK p.91

According to master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th), the essential prerequisite is the elimination of attachments, thoughts and desires, which he refers to as “defects” of the mind, comparing them to “weeds” in a crop. Without clearing away these “weeds”, the crop of inner spiritual progress cannot be harvested:

The key to practising *Dào* (*xiūdào*) is to remove defects. If defects are not removed, it is impossible to attain stillness. It is like fertile ground: if you do not clear away the weeds, the crops will not flourish. Attachments, desires, thoughts, and worries are the weeds of the mind. If you do not eradicate them, stillness and wisdom cannot develop.

Zhāng Sānfēng Tàijí liàndān mǐjué, JH19

In master Zhāng Sānfēng’s personal experience, nothing compares to leading a simple life, reducing one’s wants, rejecting what is unnecessary, and focusing only on what is truly important. Learning to recognize “what is a necessity and what is a priority”, one should reject excess and extravagance. These are “not the good medicines that benefit life”:

For those who practise *Dào* (*xiūdào*), it is essential to simplify things. Recognize what is a necessity and what is a priority. Know what to look after and what to let go. Reject anything that is unnecessary or

unimportant. Things – such as taking meat and wine as foods, silk and embroidery as clothes, gold and jade as treasures – are all the unnecessary pleasures of the passions and desires. They are not the good medicines that benefit life. People who pursue them bring about their own defeat and downfall. How deluded they are!

Zhāng Sānfēng Tàijí liàndān mǐjué, JH19

Developing his theme, master Zhāng Sānfēng points out that he is not advocating an extreme ascetic existence, since a practitioner will still have certain basic needs and duties. Rather he recommends learning to know when to stop, before enough becomes too much. Living an apparently normal life, one can inwardly practise withdrawing the mind from daily affairs:

True contemplation (*guān*) is the wisdom (*zhì*) of the sage, the foresight of the adept. Every nibble or nap is a potential source of gain or loss. Every word or deed can lead to fortune or misfortune. Rather than skilfully holding the branch, it is better to remain ineptly with the Root. Contemplating (*guān*) the Root and knowing the end is not a matter of impulsive passion. Control the mind (*shōuxīn*), simplify your affairs, reduce your activities day by day, still the body, and empty the mind, then you can “contemplate (*guān*) the profound (*miào*).”¹

Food and clothing must be provided for the body that is used to cultivate *Dào* (*xiūdào*). As to affairs that cannot be neglected and things that cannot be ignored – you ought to accept them with an empty mind and attend to them with clear vision. Do not see them as a nuisance, as this would create disturbance in the mind. When becoming irritated about things begins to disturb the mind, how can there be the peace of mind (*ānxīn*)?

We attend to food and clothing because we must look after our vehicle. To cross the ocean, we must rely on the ship that carries us.² How can we disregard food and clothing before the crossing? Illusions may not be worth the attempt to look after them, but in order to transcend these illusions, we cannot entirely reject them.

Though we have to take care of certain things, do not think in terms of gain and loss. Keep the mind constantly calm and peaceful – regardless of whether or not there are things to attend to. Make the same effort as others, but do not entertain the same desires as others. Earn in the same way as others, but do not accumulate like others. Where there is no greed, there is no anxiety; where there is no accumulation, there is no loss. You may appear to behave like others, but your mind should always be different from the worldly.

These are the essentials of putting practice into action. You must work hard at it.

Zhāng Sānfēng Tàijí liàndān mǐjué, JH19

Other Daoist masters have shared the same viewpoint. Master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn similarly considers that excess and extravagance are not “good medicines” – either for nourishing one’s spiritual life or for enhancing one’s worldly existence:

It is important for anyone who cultivates the *Dào* (*xiūdào*) to assess and simplify things. By recognizing priorities and gauging their relative importance, he can determine what to address and what to disregard, abandoning all unnecessary and insignificant things. For instance, having meat to eat and wine to drink, dressing in silk, enjoying a lofty personal reputation and official position, or possessing fine jades and wealth – these are all entirely superfluous gratification of passions and desires. They are not good medicines that benefit life. People hanker after these things and bring loss and failure upon themselves, but when you stop and think about it, are they not all a terrible delusion (*mí*)?

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn* 4, *DZ1036 7b*, *JY213*

See also: **xiūzhēn**.

1. Cf. *Dàodé jīng* 1.
2. Cf. Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Zuòwàng lùn* 5, *DZ1036 8b–9a*; cf. *TEAK* pp.236–37, *SSTK* p.98.

xiūxīn (C) *Lit.* cultivation (*xiū*) of mind (*xīn*); in Daoism, cultivation and realization of the *Dào*.

Realization of the *Dào* requires cultivation of a clear, pure and empty mind that acts naturally, without effort. Master Héngyuè Zhēnzǐ (C9th) says that when the mind has attained such a state, the radiant *Dào* pervades all:

The way the Venerable Lord (Lǎozǐ) taught people to cultivate the *Dào* is by cultivation of the mind (*xiūxīn*). To cultivate the mind (*xiūxīn*) is to cultivate the *Dào* (*xiūdào*). The mind is the residence of spirit (*shén*) within the human body. When the mind remains empty and in non-action (*wúwéi*, unforced, selfless, and desireless action), then it will, after some time, begin to be radiant with the *Dào*. Once there is this radiance of the *Dào*, the spirit (*shén*) will be all-pervasive. Realize this pervasion of the spirit and that there is nothing that is not pervaded by it!

Héngyuè Zhēnzǐ, *Xuánzhū xīnjìng zhù*, *DZ575*, *JY204:3*; cf. *TEAK* p.219

Xiūxīn also appears in the phrase *xiūxīn yǎngxìng*, which means ‘to cultivate the mind and nurture one’s (original) nature’ or to improve oneself by meditation and realization of one’s inherent spiritual nature. Master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) writes that this is the essence of “self-refinement”:

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) consists of transmuting this human mind (*rénxīn*) into an immortal one; hence the saying: “cultivate the mind (*xiūxīn*) to nurture one’s (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*).”

Zhào Bichén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.84

See also: **xīn** (►1), **xiūdào**, **xūxīn**.

xiūzhēn (C) *Lit.* cultivation (*xiū*) of the Truth (*zhēn*); cultivation of the Real, cultivation of perfection; in Daoism, cultivation of the spiritual Truth by harmonizing with the *dé* (nature, virtue) of the *Dào*; intensive self-cultivation through spiritual practice, leading to spiritual transcendence.

Xiūzhēn has been documented in Chinese literature since at least the third millennium BCE, and is occasionally used synonymously with *xiūdào* (cultivation of the *Dào*). The Daoist canon lists around twenty works whose titles begin with *xiūzhēn*. One who has realized the *Dào* is referred to as a *zhēnrén* (true, real, or perfected person).

In order to uncover the eternal reality of the *Dào* and to recover one’s original *Dào*-nature, Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) advocates removal of all the falseness that has been acquired as a result of worldly conditioning:

The inherent (*xiāntiān*) treasure of Truth (*zhēn*) is like gold (*jīn*) and jade (*yù*). The false things that are acquired after birth (*hòutiān*) are like sand and stone. When acquired (*hòutiān*) and false things bury the inherent (*xiāntiān*) treasure of Truth (*zhēn*), it is like sand and stone burying gold (*jīn*) and jade (*yù*).

Therefore, in order to seek the inherent (*xiāntiān*) Truth (*zhēn*), all the falsehood acquired after birth (*hòutiān*) must be eliminated. Truth (*zhēn*) is the spiritual root of the one inherent Energy (*xiāntiān yīqì*). Falsehood is the combination of: tendencies conditioned by the seeds of actions over thousands of lifetimes; the nature of the acquired (*hòutiān*) disposition; the energies of the five elements (*wǔxíng*); and accumulated habits.

To find that one Truth (*zhēn*) buried under a myriad falsehoods is not an easy task. Exercises of gradual cultivation (*xiū*) must be used to eliminate the false, so that the Truth (*zhēn*) can be revealed. The elimination must be repeated until there is nothing more to clear away and all falsehood is gone. Then, the light of Truth (*zhēn*) will automatically shine bright before your eyes. It is like when all the sand and stones have been cleared away, gold (*jīn*) and jade (*yù*) appear.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Elsewhere master Liú describes the process of *xiūzhēn* as twofold – elimination of artificiality together with the cultivation of the Real; both must be practised intensively:

The elimination of the false must be thorough – until there is not a single tiny bit of falsehood left. Like the clearing of weeds: all the roots must be completely pulled out.

Cultivation of Truth (*xiūzhēn*) must be thorough – until there is not a single tiny bit of untruth left. Like the planting of a tree: the root must be firm, deep, and broad.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The replacement of untruth or artifice by Truth is effected by controlling the mind and refining the self, so that the foundation for cultivating the Real becomes secure and unshakable:

In the cultivation of Truth (*xiūzhēn*), nothing is more important than self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) and control of the mind (*chíxīn*). Self-refinement is to remove egoistic desires. Control of the mind is to strengthen the willpower. When egoistic desires are removed and the willpower is firm, the foundation is strong and immovable.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

See also: **xiūdào, zhēn** (►4).

xūxīn, xū rén xīn (C) *Lit.* to empty (*xū*) the mind (*xīn*); to empty the human mind (*rén xīn*). The term *xūxīn* first appears in the *Dàodé jīng*, where it begins a close relationship with the term *shífù* (to fill the belly). *Xūxīn* is synonymous with *xīnzhāi* (to fast the mind), a term used in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE).

Sages teach the necessity of discerning what is important in life and prioritizing accordingly. They teach that the mind should be cleared of unnecessary desires, cravings, and useless thoughts. A sense of order arises naturally in a clear mind; this leads to peace and happiness, and facilitates the process of regaining contact with the *Dào*.

The normal human mind is beset with agitation; there is seldom any mental tranquillity. The mind is likened to a wild horse or an agitated monkey, always racing about, flitting from one thing to another. The only constant is the turmoil of fears and worries, plans and calculations. The human thought process is conditioned by impressions from the senses and is plagued by a host of mental projections.

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) describes this aspect of the mind as the “human mind (*rén xīn*)”. He explains that, if one wishes to enjoy the fruits of spirituality, it is first necessary to know and understand the dual nature of the mind: the “human mind” and the “mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*)”. The turbulent “human mind” must be emptied, so that it can become a *Dào*-oriented mind (*dào xīn*), a mind that is full of the *Dào*:

‘Emptying the mind (*xūxīn*)’ means to empty the human mind (*xū rén xīn*) – this is to cultivate one’s (true) nature (*xiūxiàng*). . . .

To empty the mind (*xūxīn*), it is necessary to know the mind, since there is the human mind (*rén xīn*) and there is the mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*). The human mind (*rén xīn*) should be empty, not full. The mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*) should be full, not empty. . . .

Once (this differentiation within) the mind is understood, you do not need to empty the human mind (*rén xīn*). First you should refine the mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*), . . . then positive energy will grow through the accumulation of right actions, secondary energies will automatically fade out, and the human mind (*rén xīn*) will automatically become empty. Then the four forms (*i.e.* the body) will be unified, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) will be collected closely together, gold and jade (*i.e.* spirituality) will fill the court, and the treasure of life will be in your hands. This is the way to empty the human mind (*xū rén xīn*), nurture the mind of *Dào* (*dào xīn*), understand your original nature, and return to the home of Emptiness.

Liú Yīmíng, Wúzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

Master Liú Yīmíng adds that an empty mind becomes increasingly adaptable and accepting:

To be empty within is to be empty in mind (*xūxīn*). When the mind is empty (*xūxīn*), it has the capacity to contain things. Being firm without is putting (the inner emptiness) into action. By putting (the inner emptiness) into action, you are adapting to things. By being adaptive to things, you are able to accept things. Such things are endless, and so too is the capacity (for adaptation and acceptance). The more capacity the mind develops, the more profound it becomes. The more profound it becomes, the more capacity it has. A virtuous person (*jūnzǐ*) has a capacity for things as well as a profound mind.

Liú Yīmíng, Kǒngyì (2) chǎnzhēn, Dàxiàng zhuàn, ZW246

A primary concern for Daoist practitioners therefore is to empty the mind of all that is unnecessary, for only when a vessel has been emptied of something can it be filled with something else. Citing advanced adepts as exemplars, master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th) says that only a mind that is empty of worldly thoughts can be fully receptive to the *Dào*:

Advanced people (*shàngshì*) are pure in their faith, disciplined in themselves, and persistent (*qín*) in their practice. Their mind is empty (*xū*) like the valley spirit (*gǔshén*), where only *Dào* comes to dwell.

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Zuòwàng lùn 7, DZ1036 14a, JY213

Likewise, an eighteenth-century hermit, known by his Daoist name Yǎngzhēnzǐ (‘Master who Cultivates Reality’), responds to the question, “What is a clear mind (*míngxīn*)?” –

An empty mind (*xūxīn*) is a clear mind (*míngxīn*) that is empty of thinking and empty of the myriad things.

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241

Some Daoist masters say that an empty mind means a focused mind that remains inwardly “silent” and “still”. As the unknown author of *Writings on Great Precepts of Self-Observation* (C6th) advises practitioners:

To realize the *Dào*, empty the mind (*xūxīn*) –
 remain silent, still, and unattached,
 and turn your face to the True.
 To realize the *Dào*, remain calm at the mystic spring,
 prevent delusion from causing a disturbance
 and let (awareness of) the Origin (*yuán*) grow.
 To realize the *Dào*, annihilate intellect (*zhì*),
 put an end to discrimination,
 and permit the true human being (*zhēnrén*) to emerge.

Guānshēn dàjiè wén, DZ1364 12b

The *Scripture on Inner Contemplation* (c.C9th) emphasizes that the *Dào* will “automatically come to reside” when the practitioner has made himself ready by calmly emptying the mind:

The *Dào* cannot be transmitted by word nor attained by hearsay. One must empty the mind (*xūxīn*), calm the spirit, and the *Dào* will automatically come to reside. Ignorant people, not realizing this, labour their bodies and exhaust their minds; they exert their will and agitate their spirit.

Nèiguān jīng, DZ641 6a, TMLT p.620

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) agrees, elaborating on the necessity of simply stilling the mind – something that requires persistent effort:

In order to cultivate the Truth (*xiūzhēn*), you must first eliminate all negative tendencies. Detach yourself from all external affairs so that there is nothing to disturb the mind. Then sit in inner contemplation (*nèiguān*), and focus the mind’s attention. As soon as the attention runs out in thought, stop it immediately. When it happens again, again stop it immediately, until peaceful tranquillity is attained.

Next, even if there are no obsessions or attachments, those fleeting, wandering or aimless thoughts must also be brought to an end. Keep

practising assiduously, day and night, without losing focus even for a moment. But bring only the moving mind (*dòngxīn*) to an end, not the illumined mind (*zhàoxīn*). Remain absorbed in the empty mind (*xūxīn*), but not with the occupied mind (*yǒuxīn*). Then the mind will not be attached to anything, and will dwell in the Eternal (*cháng*).

To practise *Dào* and calm the mind, it is important to remain detached. The effort to keep the mind (*xīn*) empty (*kōng*) is still attachment; it is not detachment. Any attachment puts stress on the mind. It is not only unnatural, but also causes illness. Only when the mind is not attached to anything and remains unmoving is there true stillness and true awareness. Achieving stillness in this way, the mind energy remains calm and peaceful, becoming increasingly pure and joyful. This is proof of whether your awareness (*i.e.* your experience) is true or false.

The mind has been habitually impulsive and hardheaded for a very long time. Accordingly, it is very difficult to use discipline to calm the mind. You may calm it, but be unable to keep it so, or calm it briefly, but lose it again – struggling, winning and losing battles, sweating from the fight. Nevertheless, after a long time, the mind will become submissive and tame. Do not give up the work of a lifetime simply because there are no results for the time being.

The mind is used to being attached to things, and is not accustomed to self-sufficiency. Now, for the first time, without anything to which it can attach itself, it is unable to remain at peace within itself. Even if there is some momentary peace, it reverts to its aimless wandering. Whenever it wanders, bring it back so as to maintain stillness. After some time, it will automatically become calm, tame, and peaceful. Constantly, day and night, you must consciously calm it – whether you are busy or resting, sitting or sleeping, or attending to things. If you can attain stillness of the mind, then you must nurture it in quietude; do not allow anger to disturb it. Whenever there is a moment of peace, you will enjoy it. Gradually it will become tame, increasingly pure, and detached.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

He goes on to outline some of the thoughts that may disturb the mind. All are to be eliminated, for “when the mind is full, there is no room for the *Dào*”, but “when the mind is peaceful and empty, the *Dào* will automatically take up residence there”:

Sometimes you may have doubts about things. Consider them for a while, and then continue attending to your worldly affairs (*shì*). Return to (pure) awareness, and the doubts will dissolve. This develops wisdom and corrects the foundation of your self-awareness. After that, there must be no more thinking. Thinking will permit your intellect (*zhì*) to harm your (original) nature; permitting the means (intellect) to

hurt the end (pure awareness). Even though you may be the outstanding talent of your time, the outcome will be that work of ten thousand lifetimes (your spiritual work) is harmed.

Whenever you are troubled by disturbing, negative or aimless thoughts, you must immediately stop them. Whenever you hear of things concerning honour or dishonour, or good or bad, you should dismiss them all to prevent the mind from taking them in. If the mind takes them in, it becomes full. When the mind is full, there is no room for the *Dào*. All the things you see or hear, regard them as if you had not seen or heard them. Then the mind will not discriminate between right or wrong, or good or bad. A mind that does not take in anything external is called an empty mind (*xūxīn*). A mind that does not go after anything external is called a peaceful mind (*ānxīn*). When the mind is peaceful and empty, the *Dào* will automatically take up residence there.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Even the slightest thought will disturb the mind:

If you engage in wilful thoughts or employ forceful actions at the wrong time or for the wrong reason, and yet regard yourself as being detached, this is not true understanding. Why? Because the mind is like the eyes. Getting even the finest hair in your eye is disturbing. Similarly, concerning yourself over even the smallest matter disturbs and scatters the mind. Afflicted with the ailment of disturbance, the mind is difficult to calm and focus. Therefore, the very first concern in practising the *Dào* is to remove such ailments. Because, unless they are removed, it will be hard to attain the goal of stillness. It is like a fertile field full of thistles and thorns where, even if you were to sow seeds, healthy crops would not grow. Attachments, desires, thoughts and worries are the thistles and thorns of the mind. If they are not removed, stillness and wisdom will not grow.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

It is, says Yáng Dàoshēng in summary, a path of faith and persistence:

In order to attain the true *Dào*, those who aspire to reach it need to develop deep faith and strong yearning, and cultivate the practice persistently in accordance with the precepts. If you remain persistent, from start to finish, you will attain the true *Dào*.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

See also: *ānxīn* (8.1), *shífù*, *xīnzhāi*.

yād (P) *Lit.* Remembrance, recollection, memory, repetition; in Sufism, remembrance of God, repetition of a word or phrase to aid the recollection of God; more commonly called *dhikr* (remembrance, recollection, repetition, recitation).

Rūmī describes the benefits of remembrance of the Divine, providing, as always, inspiration as well as instruction:

Never be without the remembrance (*yād*) of Him. For the remembrance (*yād*) of Him is strength and feathers and wings to the bird of the spirit. . . . By the remembrance (*yād*) of God, little by little your inward heart will become illumined and you will gain release from the world. It is like a bird that desires to fly to heaven – though it may not reach heaven, yet every moment it rises farther from the earth and flies higher than the other birds. Or it is as if you have some musk in a jar, and the lid of the jar is narrow; you put your hand into the jar but cannot extract the musk, but even so, your hand becomes perfumed and your nostrils are gratified. So too is the remembrance (*yād*) of God: though you may not reach His Essence, yet His remembrance (*yād*) leaves its mark on you, and great benefits accrue from the recollection (*ẓikr*) of Him.

Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 45, KFF p.175; cf. DRA p.183, SOU pp.182–83

Some Sufis have seen no advantage in external, spoken repetition. Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī reasons that since the tongue is a part of the body, a part of this world and something apart from or “alien” to God, it cannot lead the spirit to God. What is required is the inner experience of the remembrance of God:

It is recorded that there came a time that Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, the great *ṣūfī* master of Persia, would not perform repetition with the tongue (*ẓikr-i zabān*). When asked about this, he answered: “I find this remembrance with the tongue (*yād-i zabān*) to be strange! It is strange because the tongue is an alien, and what use is an alien here? Remembrance (*yād*) of Him is within my soul.”

Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 p.420; cf. in SSE9 p.26

See also: **dhikr**.

yǎng (C) *Lit.* to bring up (children), to raise or keep (animals), to support, to give birth; to foster, to nourish, to nurture, to cultivate. *Yǎng*, as nourishing, nurturing or cultivating, is a characteristic Chinese notion, several forms of which are discussed in Daoist texts. These include: to cultivate one’s (physical) life (*yǎngshēng*); to cultivate one’s (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*); to cultivate one’s form (*yǎngxíng*) or everything connected to physical embodiment, including thoughts and feelings; to cultivate the spirit (*yǎngshén*); to

cultivate one's life energy (*yǎngqì*); to cultivate the will (*yǎngzhì*); and to cultivate the mind (*yǎngxīn*). See **yǎngqì**, **yǎngshén**, **yǎngshēng**, **yǎngxīn**, **yǎngxíng**, **yǎngxìng**, **yǎngzhì**.

yǎngqì (C) *Lit.* to nourish (*yǎng*) life energy (*qì*); to nurture or cultivate *qì*.

According to Chinese thought, subtle life energy (*qì*) is inherent in all living beings. However, during the course of life its supply is diminished, and when exhausted, death ensues. Daoists teach that not only can the exhaustion of *qì* be prevented, but *qì* can also be replenished, at least in part, by various physical and spiritual exercises.

It is through nurturing *qì* that the conscious energy of *shén* (spirit) is preserved. In the *Scripture for Daily Internal Practice*, written during the *Sòng* dynasty (960–1279), the anonymous author refers to *qì* as the “mother of spirit”. This is to be understood in the context of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), where *jīng* (vital essence) is first refined and transmuted into *qì*, and effort is then focused on refining and transmuting *qì* into *shén* (spirit). In this respect, *qì* ‘gives birth to’ refined spirit:

Qì is the mother of spirit (*shén*);
spirit is the child of *qì*.
Like a hen incubating an egg,
preserve spirit and nourish *qì* (*yǎngqì*).
Then you will never be separated
from the Wondrous (*miào*, *i.e.* the *Dào*).
Nèi rìyòng jīng, DZ645 1b, HDP6 p.21

A commentary popularly attributed to master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th) outlines the method by which *qì* is to be nourished:

Practitioners should first nourish *qì* (*yǎngqì*). The method is to give up speech and to hold on to the One (*shǒuyī*). By giving up speech, *qì* will not be dissipated; by holding on to the One (*shǒuyī*), spirit will not go outward. A maxim goes: “Hold the tongue still; hold the spirit (*bàoshén*) steady.”

Zhū Lǚzǐ Bǎizì bēi, in *Xuánjī zhǐjiǎng*, in *Zhāng Sānfēng xiānshēng quánjī*,
JY236 7:25a, ZW125

Minimizing speech is only one of the ways in which *qì* can be nurtured and preserved. Master Mǎ Yù (C12th) lists several other practices that assist the cultivation of *qì*:

To cultivate your *qì* (*yǎngqì*), scorn tastes (eat plainly). To cultivate your (true) nature (*yǎngxìng*), rid yourself of anger. To cultivate your

dé (virtue, *yǎngdé*), be humble. To cultivate the *Dào* (*yǎngdào*), be present with the One (*shǒuyī*), be pure (*qīng*) and still (*jìng*), be calm and serene (*tiándàn*). Your name need no longer be in the (karmic) account book. Detach your mind from power and profit (*shìlì*). As a result, you will shed the human shell and become a devotee of heaven.

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 2b

In another passage, he mentions the benefits of meditation and peaceful sleep:

The essence of *Dào* is no mind (*wúxīn*). The operation of *Dào* is no words. Its basis is flexibility (*róu*), its foundation is purity and stillness (*qīngjìng*).

People accomplish this by moderating food and drink, and by stopping thoughts and worries. They meditate to harmonize breathing; they sleep peacefully to nurture *qì* (*yǎngqì*).

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 7a

He also extols the advantages of being content with a simple way of life and with few attachments. This enhances peace of mind and happiness, and helps a practitioner attain the goal of purity and stillness, both within and without:

To nurture your *qì* (*yǎngqì*) and make your spirit (*shén*) whole, you must rid yourself entirely of your myriad *karmas* (*yuán*, causes). Be pure and still on the surface and within. If you remain dedicated and devoted for a long time, your spirit will become stable, and your *qì* will be harmonious.

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 15bff.

By following this advice, the goal will surely be attained:

When the mind does not scatter, then your original nature (*xìng*) is still (*dìng*). When the body is not laboured, then your vital essence (*jīng*) becomes whole. When spirit (*shén*) is not disturbed, the elixir (*dān*, innate spiritual awareness) is produced. Then passions disappear into emptiness, and the spirit (*shén*) dwells with the Absolute (*jí*). This is attainment of the subtle *Dào* without leaving home.

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 7a

And:

If by one-pointed concentration you can bring clarity (*qīng*) to your mind, purify (*jìng*) your will, nourish your *qì* (*yǎngqì*) and make your spirit (*shén*) whole, you will pass into your native land of nothingness (*wúhéyǒu*).

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù, DZ1057 8b

In summary, master Mǎ Yù says:

A student of the *Dào* should not concern himself with anything other than nurturing his *qì* (yǎngqì).

Mǎ Yù, *Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù*, DZ1057 4a–b, in TPEQ p.64

In *A Genuine Guide to Cultivation of Nature and Life* (C17th), the author recommends ‘sitting quietly (*jìngzuò*)’ in meditation as the way to quieten and empty the mind, so that one’s *qì* can be nurtured and the spirit preserved:

Sitting (*zuò*) for a long period,
forget (*wàng*) what you know. . . .

Sitting quietly (*jìngzuò*),
there is little thought and scant desire.

Deepen the mind, nurture your *qì* (yǎngqì),
preserve your spirit (*shén*).

This is the secret of success in cultivating perfection (*xiūshēn*).

Yīn Zhēnrén gāodì, *Xīngmìng guīzhǐ*, JHL67; cf. XGB (II:13c) p.176

See also: **jīng-qì-shén** (►1), **qì** (5.1).

yǎngshén (C) *Lit.* to nurture (*yǎng*) the spirit (*shén*); to nourish, cultivate, or conserve the spirit; broadly synonymous with *liànshén* (to refine the spirit) and *xiūshén* (to cultivate the spirit). Daoists teach that one’s true nature, with which every individual is born, is original spirit (*yuánshén*), but that this is veiled by the processes of worldly existence: worries, fears, attachments, anger, lust, egotism, and so forth. This veil can be reversed by inner cultivation, to the point where all body energies are eventually transformed into spirit.

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) suggests that spiritual masters (“immortals”) introduced the attractive prospect of physical longevity in an effort to persuade people to put in the effort required for spiritual practice – for nurturing the spirit:

Originally, immortals (*xiānjiā*) only taught people to nurture the spirit (*yǎngshén*). But because people are deluded and unable to stop indulging in desires (*yù*), it is believed that the teaching of longevity (*chángshēng*) was established, but only to entice people to practise refinement (*xiūliàn*).

Only through aspiration for long life (*chángshēng*) are worldly people prepared to give up cravings and desires and single-mindedly refine vital essence (*jīng*) and energy (*qì*). This is the inner cause, irrespective of anything external. But when, through the practice of

refinement (*xiūliàn*), they ascend to the third heaven (*sāngōng*), the inner bliss (*kuàilè*) becomes so indescribable that they develop great attachment to it, then everything else becomes unimportant. Then the mind (*xīn*) becomes somewhat arrested, since it gradually attains tranquillity (*níngjìng*), and the original spirit (*yuánshén*) gradually reveals itself. This is like the development of an infant (*yīng'ér xiànxàng*). By these practices, they enter the sphere of Emptiness (*xūwú*). As the myriad thoughts dissolve, the mind becomes less distracted, and the original spirit (*yuánshén*) gradually reveals itself as self-existent, independent of past or future. The physical body (*xínghái*) can no longer obscure it. This is transcendent emancipation (*chāotuō*). In truth, it is simply a case of arresting and tying up the mind by means of refining the vital essence (*jīng*) and life energy (*qì*), and nurturing the profound subtlety of the original spirit (*yuánshén*).

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) is well known for drawing spiritual inspiration from observations of the natural world. Noticing, for example, how a gardener grafts new branches onto old fruit trees, he points out that it can never be too late, nor can one ever be too old, to disentangle oneself from the many ties of this world. Since the body has to be abandoned when it has reached its age limit, how much more so the thoughts and imaginings of the mind, which are completely unreal? Those who live a life focused on the world are “depleting their spirit”. Yet, however far one has strayed from the Source (the *Dào*), it is still possible to ‘graft’ correct and beneficial ways onto the trunk of one’s life, and thereby ‘nurture one’s spirit’. All it requires is recognition of one’s errors and a willingness to change:

If you graft a young branch onto an old peach tree, it will again bear peaches. If you graft a young branch onto an old plum tree, it will again bear plums. This is because, even if the tree is old, its source of energy is not cut off.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of ‘grafting’ when people become old. Human beings age because they indulge in passions and desires without giving it a second thought. Their minds are disturbed by all kinds of worries and anxieties. Their bodies toil over everything. Their vital essence (*jīng*) is consumed and their spirit (*shén*) depleted. They consider the false to be true, and mistake misery for happiness.

Their one tiny drop of vitality is damaged and reduced to almost nothing. With their original nature (*xìng*) veiled, their (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) disturbed, and their origin unstable, they change from strong to old, and from old to death. It cannot be blamed on heaven: it is really self-inflicted.

If you become aware of your mistakes, make the necessary changes to relinquish passions, attachments, and entanglements (*qiānchán*); detach yourself from liquor, lust, greed, and anger; consider wealth and fortune as passing clouds; think of power and profit as robbers and enemies – then everything will become empty, and you will not be attached to anything.

Stay focused until your life energy (*qì*) is like that of an infant; live a simple life like a hermit; conserve your vital essence (*jīng*) and nurture your spirit (*yǎngshén*); detach yourself from delusion and return to Reality; cultivate the Root continuously; let every step of your practice be on the right path, and keep on going; develop true thought and reduce false thought; be truthful and sincere within and without; merge with the inherent order – then you can establish (spiritual) life, reverse aging, and revert to the state of an infant.

This is the *dào* (way) of grafting young branches onto old trees. An ancient immortal said: “Whether you are seventy or eighty, for as long as a single breath remains, the elixir can be restored (*huándān*).” How true!

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Elsewhere, master Liú expands on the changes that need to be made in attitude, temperament, and action:

Restrain yourself and recover propriety. Reverse hardness (*gāng*, inflexibility) and become soft (*róu*, flexible). Clear away all anger, hatred, anxiety, and disturbance. Eliminate the mind’s tendency toward conflict. Change your impulsive and excitable nature, and return to a gentle and calm nature. Stay focused until your *qì* is soft. Empty the mind to nurture the spirit (*yǎngshén*). Then there will be no self or other, no this or that.

Observe things from afar: things are no things. Observe the body from close up: the body is no body. Observe the mind within: the mind is no mind; it does not distinguish nor discriminate; it is empty and void. . . . Thus one can live among the processes of creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*) but not be disturbed by them.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Those who turn their back on transient material wealth, name, fame, possessions and self-gratification, and who nurture the spirit (*yǎngshén*) instead of nurturing the form (*yǎngxíng*) or nurturing the body (*yǎngshēng*), accumulate eternal spiritual wealth:

People cultivate the Truth (*xiūzhēn*) by accumulating virtues (*dé*) and correcting their behaviour, by storing up vital essence (*jīng*), and by nurturing spirit (*yǎngshén*). They are resolute and determined, growing

stronger and stronger all the time. They remain steadfast throughout their lives, doing their (spiritual) work with a sincere mind. This can be compared to the accumulation of wealth.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

Summarizing the matter, Master Wáng Jiè (C14th) says that *yǎngshén* is to collect one's energy and attention within, reversing its direction from outward to inward:

Cultivation of spirit (*yǎngshén*) is the practice of reversing the light (*huíguāng*), day and night. If you are able to collect your energy (*qì*) and keep it absorbed in the one Breath (*yīxī*), then the spirit (*shén*) will dwell in that energy (*qì*), and that energy (*qì*) will dwell in the spiritual chamber (*shénshì*). When your spirit (*shén*) and energy (*qì*) are merged with the True, then you will ascend to the Great Clarity (*tàiqīng*, realm of the heavenly immortals).

Wáng Jiè, Dàoxuán piān 18, DZ1075

See also: **yǎng**.

yǎngshēng (C) *Lit.* to nurture (*yǎng*) life (*shēng*); to nourish life; to look after one's health, to keep fit, to maintain good health. In Daoism, *yǎngshēng* may either refer to specific techniques or be used as an umbrella term for a variety of physical and breathing exercises that promote healing, vitality, and physical longevity. *Yǎngshēng* practices are believed to predate the earliest writings on the subject, and are mentioned in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE).

The preservation of physical health is seen as a beneficial basis for spiritual practices. In this respect, *yǎngshēng* is almost identical to *yǎngxíng* (nourishing the physical body). In effect, all aspects of life can be nourished by physical exercise and meditation. Some forms of Daoist meditation explicitly involve visualizing inner organs and nourishing (directing energy to) the inner deities who administer the way the body functions.

Mystical Daoism focuses on nourishing the spirit (*shén*), believing that this automatically has a nourishing effect on the body too. Some Daoist schools place as much emphasis on nourishing the body as on nourishing the spirit; others focus more on one than the other. Attitudes vary, from those who deem it necessary to take only basic care of the body as the 'vehicle' or 'home' of the spirit, to those who pay considerable attention to keeping the body strong, fit, and healthy.

Master Chén Zhìxū (C14th) describes some of the benefits of *yǎngshēng*:

Those who devote themselves to nourishing life (*yǎngshēng*) treasure in the first place their vital essence (*jīng*). If the vital essence is full, life

energy (*qì*) is strong; if life energy is strong, spirit (*shén*) flourishes; if the spirit flourishes, the body is healthy and there are few illnesses. Internally, the five organs bloom; externally, the skin becomes smooth. One's complexion becomes luminous, and one's eyes and ears become sharp and bright.

Chén Zhìxū, Jīndān dàoyào, DZ1067 3, JY209; cf. FIAW p.16

As master Chén Zhìxū indicates, subtle *yǎngshēng* refers to techniques based on building up and circulating the vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spiritual power (*shén*) of the practitioner. These techniques are founded on physiological, psychological, and behavioural principles and include: rules concerning daily behaviour; callisthenics (*dǎoyǐn*); massage; sexual hygiene; healing; dietetics, including *pìgǔ* (abstaining from grains, fasting); *fúqì* (ingesting *qì*); visualizations, including *xíngqì* (guiding *qì*); and meditation.¹ According to Louis Komjathy, Daoists tend to categorize exercises that involve movement or the circulation of *qì* (*xíngqì*) as *yǎngshēng*, and seated or stationary postures that involve stretching and breathing exercises as *dǎoyǐn*.²

Many believe that performing *yǎngshēng* and/or *dǎoyǐn* exercises is the route to physical longevity and even physical immortality.

See also: **dǎoyǐn, yǎng.**

1. See e.g. “yangsheng,” *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ET2 pp.1148–50.

2. See e.g. Louis Komjathy, *Daoist Tradition*, DTK p.188.

yǎngxīn (C) *Lit.* to nurture (*yǎng*) the mind (*xīn*); to nourish, cultivate, or calm the mind.

In Daoism, the primary aim of a meditator is to still the mind, emptying it of all unnecessary thought. An eighteenth-century hermit, known by his Daoist name Yǎngzhēnzǐ (‘Master who Cultivates Reality’), points out that, because the nature of the mind is to be active, the first step in cultivating its potential is to calm it by adopting an attitude of *wúwéi* (non-action, non-contrivance, unforced and selfless action), thereby helping to eliminate disturbing tendencies:

From the moment people get up in the morning, they hustle and bustle all day long, without the slightest idea of what their mind (*xīn*) is doing. There may be a few who are aware of what their mind is doing, but the majority just let it run about energetically. This is contrary to how things should be and is harmful to the mind (*xīn*).

The human mind (*rénxīn*) is extremely active and powerful. The method of nurturing (*yǎng*) is to calm its nature by going along with the way it works, without pausing for the slightest moment, without letting

it go out for the slightest moment, and without forcing it for the slightest moment. Only this can be called ‘nurturing the mind (yǎngxīn)’.

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jǐ, JY241

The Confucian philosopher Mèngzǐ (*aka.* Mencius, c.371–289 BCE) suggests:

For cultivating the mind (yǎngxīn),
nothing is as good as being divested of desire (yù).

Mèngzǐ 7a; cf. in CNEL p.77 (n.171)

And one of master Liú Yīmíng’s ‘twenty-four secrets of alchemy’ is to “cultivate the mind (yǎngxīn)” rather than the palate:

Do not crave fine food:
superior people plan for the *Dào*, not food;
Inferior people cultivate the palate,
they do not cultivate the mind (yǎngxīn).

Liú Yīmíng, Dānfǎ èrshísì jué 19, in Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

See also: yǎng.

yǎngxíng (C) *Lit.* to nurture (yǎng) the form (xíng); to nourish or cultivate the form or the body. Most Daoists agree that the physical body must be cared for so that it can be effective as an instrument for mental and spiritual cultivation. The body can be nourished by eating healthy food in modest quantities and by pursuing various forms of physical exercise. ‘Cultivating the form’ encompasses not only the body, but also those things that are enjoyed through the form – *i.e.* thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and so on.

Speaking about the true or perfect man (*zhēnrén*, an exemplary Daoist), the *Book of the Masters of Huáinán* (C2nd BCE) explains that the advanced adept places no particular focus on cultivating the body through physical and breathing exercises, but focuses on protecting the body against unnecessary degradation caused by incorrect living – he “does not waste” his vital essence (*jīng*):

A perfect man (*zhēnrén*, true human being) looks upon life and death as transformations of the same thing. He views the myriad things (*wànwù*) as being of one kind (*yīfāng*). His vital essence (*jīng*) is in union with the origin of the Great Purity (*tàiqīng*, *i.e.* the *Dào*). He travels in forgetfulness to be near to the subtle. He has vital essence (*jīng*), but does not waste it. He has spirit (*shén*), but does not misuse it. He lives in harmony with the primordial nature (*pǔ*) of the great Uncreated (*hún*, the unscattered), remaining steadfast in the centre of the Ultimate Clarity (*zhìqīng*).

Joyfully closing his eyes on the world of sense (*lit.* house of long dark nights), his vision awakens to a universe of bright radiant light. He willingly retires to a corner in order to roam freely in the realms of the formless (*wúxíng*). He lives in the world, but nothing can contain him. He may stay at one place, but nowhere is his home. . . . He exists, yet as though he were nonexistent. He lives, yet he seems to be dead. . . . He is immersed in the Unfathomable, in the Unbounded. He transforms from various forms into a complete circle (of infinity) with neither beginning nor end. In detachment and stillness, he has attained Its nature (*lún*).

This is how the vital essence (*jīng*) and spirit (*shén*) are the means of ascending to the *Dào*. These are the travels (*yóu*, inner spiritual travel) of the perfect man (*zhēnrén*). As to such exercises as breathing and blowing, inhaling and exhaling, spitting out the old, drawing in the new breath, imitating in gymnastic (movement) the steps of the bear, the fluttering and expanding of the wings of birds, the ablutions of the duck, the stooping of the gibbon, the glare of the owl, the concentrated stare of the tiger (*i.e.* *dǎoyǐn*) – these exercises are human means to cultivate the bodily form (*yǎngxíng*). The perfect man (*zhēnrén*) does not bother his mind about them.

Huánánzǐ 7, DZ1184

The *Book of Master Wén* (c.200 BCE) echoes this view, adding that by focusing on nurturing and caring for the spirit, the body will automatically be nurtured:

To master the self, adepts nurture the spirit (*yǎngshén*). Lesser people nurture the body (*yǎngxíng*). A clear spirit, a calm mind, and a body completely at peace are the foundation of nurturing life (*yǎngshēng*). Healthy skin, a satisfied stomach, and satiated desires are the result of nurturing life (*yǎngshēng*). . . . In ancient times, people nurtured the root (*i.e.* they focused on the end). In latter times, people are attending to the branches (*i.e.* they focus on the means).

Wénzǐ 7, DZ746

On the same subject, the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE) reflects the attitude of mystical Daoism that *yǎngshēng* and *dǎoyǐn*, both forms of physical exercise, are of secondary importance to *yǎngshén* – nurturing the spirit through meditation. The author discourages preoccupation with nourishing the form in the quest for longevity. Instead, he points out that to “let go of the world” leads to the kind of immortality where the spirit becomes “one with heaven”:

It is sad indeed that people of the present time should think that nourishing the body (*yǎngxíng*) is sufficient to preserve life, when, in the last analysis, it is insufficient to preserve life. Why then does this generation persist in thinking it sufficient? They think that they must

do this even though it is insufficient, and because of their actions they cannot escape (the body).

For those who desire to be free of bodily cares, nothing is better than to let go of the world. Once having let go of the world, they are free of its entanglements (*léi*). When there are no attachments, you can be positive and balanced (*zhèngpíng*). Being positive and balanced, you recover (true spiritual) life (*gēngshēng*). With (true spiritual) life recovered, you are virtually there (with the *Dào*).

Why is it that we should let go of worldly affairs and set aside our preoccupation with life? If we let go of worldly affairs, then there will be no toil for the body. If we set aside our preoccupation with life, then our vital essence (*jīng*) will not be diminished. Now if the body's energies are kept intact and the vital essence (*jīng*) is restored, then you will become one with heaven. . . . When the bodily energies and vital essence (*jīng*) remain undiminished, this is called 'being able to shift (to a new level)'. In this case, your vital essence (*jīng*) will be refined, and further refined, until you return to being a coequal companion of heaven (*i.e.* *Dào*).

Zhuāngzǐ 19; cf. OTIT p.171

The author of the *Scripture on Western Ascension* (C5th CE) concurs with the ideas expressed in both the *Wénzǐ* and the *Zhuāngzǐ*, particularly the principle that taking care of the spirit has the effect of taking care of the body. The scripture also refers to a well-known passage in the *Dàodé jīng* which observes that the body and its associated sense of "me" are the cause of suffering:

What makes me liable to great suffering
is having a body (*shēn*);

If I had no body (*shēn*), what great suffering could befall me?

Dàodé jīng 13; cf. TT1 p.56

According to the *Scripture on Western Ascension*:

The untrue *Dào* teaches you to nourish the body (*yǎngxíng*); the true *Dào* teaches you to nourish the spirit (*yǎngshén*).

When the spirit realizes the all-pervading *Dào*, you can freely depart from or be in this world. The spirit can make the body (*xíng*) fly; it can move mountains. The body (*xíng*) ultimately is mere dust and ashes. How can we become aware of this?

Ears and eyes, sound and colour keep one forever in a state of tension. The joys of nose and mouth – fragrances and tastes – are only sources of dissatisfaction. The body (*shēn*) is the root of all distress; it experiences pain and irritation, such as heat and cold. Self-will (*yì*) arises through yearning for some bodily (*xíng*) state. But it leads to

melancholy, ill will, anxiety, and distress. By being a prisoner of my body (*shēn*), I have come to know that the body (*shēn*) is great suffering.

Observe the past; look at the present: who has ever kept his body (*xíng*) intact? Even I have white hair, growing weaker as I ripen in years.

Xishēng jīng 7, DZ666, JY84, in DZ726 2:8b–10b; cf. *TMPS* p.239

Echoing the *Dàodé jīng*, an inscription carved in 829 CE into a rock monument on Mount Wángwū (in present-day Hénán province) affirms that man's time is better spent working on the attainment of spiritual immortality rather than physical longevity. This inscription, whose content is regarded as a summary of the teachings of master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th), says that sitting in forgetfulness (*i.e.* meditation) is the “foundation of” and the “gateway to immortality”. The author refers to the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) practice of successively refining the vital essence (*jīng*), the life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) in order that one's entire being or embodiment (*tǐ*) – *i.e.* everything that can be called the ‘self’ – can unite with the *Dào*:

My late master told me that sitting in forgetfulness (*zuòwàng*, meditation) is the foundation of eternal life (*chángshēng*). Thus, we harbour truth to refine the body (*liànxíng*, *i.e.* the vital essence or *jīng*); once the body is pure, we merge with the life energy (*qì*). To refine the life energy (*liànqì*), we embrace the *Dào* (*hándào*); once the life energy (*qì*) is pure, we merge with the spirit (*shén*). When one's entire embodiment (*tǐ*) is absorbed in the *Dào*, we speak of ‘realizing the *Dào* (*dédào*)’. As the *Dào* is without anything greater, how could the immortal ever die? Truth is the essence of the *Dào*, thus we cleanse the spirit to identify with the Truth.

Zhuāngzǐ says: “I smash up my limbs and body (*i.e.* my connection with the body and its parts is dissolved), drive out intellect and perception, cast off form, do away with knowledge, and become one with the Great Pervasion.”¹ This is exactly what we mean. Zhuāngzǐ also says: “Wisdom and tranquillity take turns cultivating each other; thus, harmony and order emerge from a tranquil inner nature (*xìng*).”² That is exactly it. And he says: “He whose inner being rests in intense concentration will send forth a heavenly light.”³ Here, ‘resting’ refers to the mind while ‘heavenly light’ means the radiance (*zhào*) of wisdom (*huì*, gnosis, mystical insight). So, when you concentrate your mind, the radiance of wisdom develops within. By this radiance, you can then see the myriad aspects of projected reality and, in emptiness and oblivion, your mind (*xīn*) will dissolve in boundless serenity. This is what we call ‘sitting in oblivion (*zuòwàng*)’.... Sitting in oblivion is the gateway to immortality.

Zhāng Hóngmíng, *Zuòwàng piān*, in *Dàoshū*,
DZ1017 2:7a, SCJS; cf. *SSTK* pp.113–14

The inscription also refers to the previously quoted passage from the *Dàodé jīng*, again explaining that *shēn* (body, self) does not refer only to the physical body, but to one's entire being or embodiment. It is this that is to unite with the *Dào*:

Lǎozǐ says: "If I had no body (*shēn*), what great suffering could befall me?"⁴ But if one did not have a body and thus returned to annihilation (*i.e. nirvāṇa*) should not that be regarded as the loss of the foundation of immortal life? Yet I answer: what you would call 'not having a body (*shēn*)' does not refer to not having this particular physical body. It rather means that your entire being (*tǐ*, embodiment) is united with the great *Dào*; that one is never influenced by glorious positions and does not seek speedy advancement. Calmly and without desires, it means to forget that there is this body (*shēn*), dependent on all kinds of things. If the sage, therefore, urges us to refine the spirit and merge with the *Dào*, ascend into the formless and mystically unite with the *Dào*, then this is exactly the meaning of 'casting off form, doing away with knowledge, and smashing up one's limbs and body'.

*Zhāng Hóngmíng, Zuòwàng piān, in Dàoshū,
DZ1017 2:7a–b, SCJS; cf. SSTK pp.114–15*

The author goes on to emphasize the essential role of the form or body (*xíng*) in the process of realizing the *Dào*, and the consequent significance of the body and spirit being "joined in wholeness":

Immortal life is spirit (*shén*) and body (*xíng*) being joined in wholeness. Thus it is said: "... Our body (*xíng*) is a vessel, it is the storehouse of our true nature (*xìng*). If it is destroyed, our true nature (*xìng*) has no place to dwell. If our true nature (*xìng*) had no place to dwell, where in me would it be?"⁵

Thus, what we value most about the body (*xíng*) and spirit (*shén*) is their being joined in wholeness. One who only nourishes the spirit (*yǎngshén*) without nourishing the body (*yǎngxíng*) is like a man who destroys his house and lives out in the open. How could the spirit then rest peacefully? ... This is precisely why Daoists place such high value on body and spirit being joined in wholeness. So how could it not be absurd and fantastic to speak of contemplation in the absence of the body?

*Zhāng Hóngmíng, Zuòwàng piān, in Dàoshū,
DZ1017 2:7b–8a, SCJS; cf. SSTK pp.115–16*

Nonetheless, he adds that although people may understand this, they still fear physical death. This is why "sitting in oblivion (*zuòwàng*)" and following the path of inner alchemy is so essential. Only by this means can the body-form be transcended and one can finally "enter the formless (*wúxíng*)", and attain the ultimate goal of "realizing the *Dào*":

Nowadays, there are many people who realize that glorious positions are worthless and vain, and who understand that life and death are one whole. Yet when their end approaches, they will seek out doctors and pray to the demons. To these normal people the sages say: “He who dies yet lives will live forever.”⁶ How could this be empty talk?

Therefore, when one wants to attain some level of the *Dào*, one must first of all practise sitting in oblivion (*zuòwàng*). (Sitting in) oblivion means the annihilation of the myriad states of projected reality. To do this one must first understand that one holds countless foolish assumptions. Next, one must concentrate one’s mind. Above the concentrated mind everything must be free, open, coverless. Beneath the concentrated mind, everything must be wide, spacious, bottomless.⁷ If you just continue to remain in this state and do not move, then you will unite mystically with the *Dào*. This we call ‘entering the state of intense concentration’. Once intense concentration is established, wisdom (*huì*) will arise by itself. . . .

(However, since this form) has not escaped the moulding of *yīn* and *yáng* (the influence of the creative process of duality) and revolves through the grime of the world (reincarnates), one must rely on inner alchemy (*jīndān*) in order to undergo the metamorphosis of wings (*yǔhuà*, i.e. to become immortal).⁸ Only then can one ascend and enter the formless (*wúxíng*). . . . Entering thus the gateway of the boundless, one becomes fully one with the *Dào*. This we call ‘realizing the *Dào*’.

Zhāng Hóngmíng, Zuòwàng piān, in Dàoshū, DZ1017 2:8a, SCJS; cf. SSTK pp.116–17

See also: **dǎoyīn, yǎng**.

1. *Zhuāngzǐ* 6.
2. *Zhuāngzǐ* 16.
3. *Zhuāngzǐ* 23.
4. Cf. *Dàodé jīng* 13.
5. See Wú Yún, *Shénxiān kěxué lùn*, in *Zōngxuán xiānsheng wénjí*, DZ1051 2:11a.
6. See *Dàodé jīng* 33.
7. See Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Dìngguān jīng*, DZ400 5a, JY15.
8. See Wú Yún, *Shénxiān kěxué lùn*, in *Zōngxuán xiānsheng wénjí*, DZ1051 2:12b.

yǎngxìng (C) *Lit.* to nurture (*yǎng*) nature (*xìng*); to nourish one’s original, inherent, and inner nature or essence; may refer either to the cultivation of one’s spiritual nature or to the body energies of *jīng-qì-shén* (vital essence, life energy, spirit); mental and spiritual cultivation.

In one of her poems, the Daoist adept Fán Yúnqiào (C3rd) says that, to achieve this end, stillness of the mind is the first essential. “Turn it around (*zhuǎn*),” she advises, alluding to the Daoist practice of reversion (*fǎn*) – of stopping the mind’s outward tendency and turning it inward towards the *Dào*. With persistence, the ox-mind is eventually reversed and is led towards the “boundless” *Dào*. She also encourages women not to neglect the nurturing of their inner being in favour of domestic skills:

You must first be still
 in order to nurture your (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*).
 Why go to the trouble of pleading for skill (*qǐqiǎo*) in needlework,
 when you can rein in the iron ox and turn it around (*zhuǎn*)?
 Then the Boundless will reveal its profound wisdom.

Fán Yúnqiào, in Nǚdān shījī, in Nǚdān hébiān, NHHL 20:2b

“Pleading for skill (*qǐqiǎo*)” refers to a custom associated with the popular 2,300-year-old *Qǐqiǎo* Festival, in which young girls recite ritual prayers to *Zhīnǚ* (‘Weaving Girl’), the fairy goddess also known as the ‘Queen of Skills’. In their prayers, they plead for dexterity in needlework, emblematic of the traditional attributes of a good wife. The *Qǐqiǎo* festival is celebrated during the first seven days of the seventh lunar month, hence its alternative name – the *Qīxī* (double-seven) Festival. The “iron ox” is a Buddhist metaphor for mental firmness and composure, and also symbolizes the formidable power of the mind.

A poem by the Chinese philosopher Zísī (C5th BCE), the only grandson of Confucius (Kǒngfūzǐ), echoes the importance of cultivating true original nature (*yǎngxìng*) in order to become a sage:

If there are no wayward thoughts, the spirit will not be distracted,
 then all things will return to their original purity.
 Make haste and find the cavity of radiant consciousness (*língmíng qiào*);
 Nurture your (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*)
 and recover your mind (*cúnxīn*) to become a sage (*shèngrén*).

Zísī, in Shuījīngzǐ, Qīngjīng jīng (20) túzhù, ZW77, CSTM p.128

The “cavity of radiant consciousness” indicates the portal or transition between the material and the spiritual, known to Daoists as the mysterious pass (*xuánquān*), the mysterious opening (*xuánqiào*), and by various other names.

In the *Scripture on the Three Pure Subtle Natures* (C18th), a collection of sayings attributed to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE), the master states that one’s original and true nature (*xìng*) derives from the Great Void; and he suggests a method by which it can be nurtured and made whole:

Exercises to nurture your (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*) should not be postponed. How then to nurture your (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*)?

Your (original) nature (*xìng*) originates in the Non-Beginning, is appropriated from the Absolute, but divides after birth.

In acquired (*hòutiān*, ‘after-birth’) nature, inherent order and energy still exist. Inherent order has divided into true and false, the false having lost the original Truth; and inherent energy has divided into clear and turbid, the turbid having become confused. Being degraded and confused, it can no longer be called (original) nature (*xìng*), so it is called acquired (nature).

In the Absolute, the inherent order and energy are integrated; there is nothing false or polluted. This is the inherent state of nature (*xìng*). In the Non-Beginning, one cannot speak of (original) nature (*xìng*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). So if in the Non-Beginning, there is neither (true) nature nor (true spiritual) life, how can we call it (original) nature (*xìng*)? Since it originated from the Non-Beginning, you must know the Non-Beginning. Being neither (original) nature nor (true spiritual) life, the Non-Beginning is the Great Void, like a grain of seed. When germinated, this seed becomes the root of the Ultimate, whereupon (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) comes to be, and (original) nature (*xìng*) follows. To nurture this nature (*yǎngxìng*) is to nurture this seed.

The seed of the Non-Beginning is indistinct, vast, and formless. Where then to start (to nurture it)? The way to nurture (*yǎng*) it is by exercises. First is the nurturing (*yǎng*) of the acquired nature (*hòutiān zhī xìng*). Inherent order and energy is present in the acquired nature, but one cannot distinguish whether it is clear or turbid, true or false. How then can it be nurtured (*yǎng*)? You must both nurture (*yǎng*) and manage (*zhì*) it to remove the false and cleanse the turbid. To remove the false is not easy, to cleanse the turbid is difficult. Out of compassion for people of the world, I point out a method by which to start.

Qīngwēi sānpǐn zhēnjīng, ZW225

The term *yǎngxìng* also occurs in the Chinese idiom *xiūxīn yǎngxìng*, which means to ‘cultivate the mind to nurture one’s (original) nature’ or to improve oneself by meditation and realization of one’s inherent spiritual nature. Master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) emphasizes the spiritual significance of the saying:

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) consists of transmuting this human mind (*rénxīn*) into an immortal one; hence the saying: “cultivate the mind (*xiūxīn*) to nurture one’s (original) nature (*yǎngxìng*).”

Zhào Bìchén, Xìngmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI p.84

See also: *xìng* (8.1), *yǎng*.

yǎngzhì (C) *Lit.* to nurture (*yǎng*) the will (*zhì*); to nourish intention; in Daoism, to develop a strong sense of spiritual purpose.

Generally speaking, human beings channel the mind's will or intention according to worldly desires and ambitions. The desire of a Daoist practitioner, on the other hand, is to attain union of the spirit with its Source; to merge with the One. Daoist masters teach the importance of developing (*yǎng*) a strong intention or will (*zhì*) that is directed towards the goal of union with the *Dào*.

In the development of this higher intention, the comforts of the body take second place. The body is taken care of as a consequence of spiritual practice, reinforced by moderate physical exercise and a simple vegetarian diet. Taking care of the form (*yǎngxíng*) in order to remain in good health, and cultivating the mind (*yǎngxīn*) in order to achieve its peaceful potential, both facilitate the primary aim of cultivating the formless – *i.e.* cultivating one's inner nature (*yǎngxìng*) or nurturing the spirit (*yǎngshén*).

The *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE) takes the example of Zēngzǐ – a deeply spiritual disciple of Confucius who was unconcerned with the world – to demonstrate that the truly great person is one who cares little for his appearance and bodily welfare, and even less for name and fame:

Zēngzǐ was residing in Wèi. He wore a robe quilted with hemp, and had no outer garment; his countenance looked rough and emaciated; his hands and feet were calloused and hard; he would go three days without lighting a fire; in ten years, he had had no new suit of clothes; if he put his cap on straight, the strings would break; if he drew tight the overlap of his robe, his elbows could be seen; when he put on his shoes, his heels would show through. Yet, shuffling along in his shoes, he sang the 'Sacrificial Odes of *Shāng*' with a voice that filled heaven and earth as if it came from a bell or a sounding stone. The 'son of heaven' (*tiānzǐ*, *i.e.* the Emperor) could not get him to be a minister; and no feudal prince could gain him as a friend. So it is that he who nourishes his (spiritual) purpose (*yǎngzhì*), forgets his body; and he who nourishes his form (*yǎngxíng*), discards all thoughts of gain; and he who follows the *Dào*, forgets his own mind.

Zhuāngzǐ 28; cf. TT2 p.158

Using the will (*zhì*) to focus on the spiritual goal rather than worldly benefit, a Daoist lives in the world, but apart from it. Desiring only spiritual well-being, he remains in a state where his mind is at peace and his body is spiritually nourished. According to the *Book of the Masters of Huáinán* (C2nd BCE), the *zhēnrén* (true man, a spiritual master) goes through life with his attention focused on the *Dào*, undistracted by other things:

He who is called a true man (*zhēnrén*) implies an identity of his (original) nature with the *Dào*. . . . He is established upon the one Thing (the *Dào*) with undivided attention, and has no second thing in mind. . . . Such a one is verily in harmony with his own being, . . . he has his heart and purpose (*xīnzhì*) governed by the spirit within. . . .

Joyfully closing his eyes on the world of sense (*lit.* house of long dark nights), his vision awakens to a universe of bright radiant light. He willingly retires to a corner in order to roam freely in the realm of the formless (*wúxíng*).

Huáinánzǐ 7, DZ1184; cf. TGLE pp.64–65, 67

For a disciple, pursuing the spiritual way begins with cultivating a sense of spiritual purpose in order to tame and purify the mind. Maintaining a strong will leads to experience of the spiritual realities of the *Dào*.

See also: **yǎng**.

yaza (J) *Lit.* night (*ya*) sitting (*za*); the practice of *zazen* (seated meditation) after the normal time for sleep (generally 9–10 p.m.) in a *Zen* Buddhist monastery; a voluntary part of some *sesshins* (periods of intensive meditation, usually lasting several days), and a standard part of other more rigorous *sesshins*, such as those that include the festival of *Rōhatsu*, which commemorates the Buddha's enlightenment. *Yaza* is either performed after the last evening period of meditation or early in the morning before the start of the monastic routine.

yī (C) *Lit.* medicine, doctor; to cure, to treat. See **liáo**.

yī dam (T) See **ishṭa-deva**.

yīhūdīm (He) (sg. *yīhūd*) *Lit.* unifications, bindings; kabbalistic meditation exercises based on the repetition and contemplation of combinations of sacred words, names, or the letters thereof. For example, taking the name of God *YHWH* (*Yahweh*) – comprised of the Hebrew letters *yod-heh-waw-heh* – and combining it with *eḥad* (one, unique) is to join the name of God with the assertion that He is one and unique. This is considered a powerful statement with spiritual reverberations.

Yīhūdīm are intended to ‘unify’ the name of God and bind the soul to the spiritual realms. The method is based on a passage from *Deuteronomy*: “Hear, O Israel: ‘The Lord your God, the Lord is One,’”¹ regarded as one of the most important passages in Jewish prayers. The practice originated with Rabbi Isaac Luria of sixteenth-century Safed in northern Israel, founded upon similar methods of concentration and meditation taught by Abraham Abulafia and other earlier mystics. Notable in Luria's system is that the practices were performed mentally, not uttered audibly, which he believed made them safer, perhaps out of a belief that audible practices would have left the meditators

open to the influence of evil powers. Later, the Ba'al Shem Tov and other mystics of the Hasidic lineages also created *yihudim*. Most of the *yihudim* were designed individually by rabbis for particular disciples.

Luria taught that at the time of creation a great cosmic 'catastrophe' took place, which he called *shevirat ha-kelim* (breaking of the vessels). As a result, the souls, which he envisioned as sparks of the primal Light, were exiled from their divine home and imprisoned in the material realm. Concurrently, the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities by which the created realms came into being) were cast into a state of disharmony with each other. Souls were therefore separated from their divine Source, but retained a longing to return. The name Luria gave to the return of the soul and restoration of harmony among the *sefirot* was *tikkun* (restoration). The practice of *yihudim* was a part of this restoration.

According to Luria and the mystics who came after him, the individual, through correct *yihudim* and other meditational practices known as *kavanot* (which sometimes included specific *yihudim*), can make changes in the divine order and return the sparks to their home. *Yihudim*, he believed, had the power to open the channel between the divine and human realms, and allow the divine light to reverse its downward and outward flow, and thereby return from this world to its source in *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite, the Godhead).

The *yihudim* taught by Luria also involved exercises believed to impart the ability to commune with the souls of departed *zaddiks* (saints), who were thought to possess the power to assist a person's spiritual progress. Ideally, these practices were performed at grave sites. The practitioner would prostrate himself on the grave of a particular *zaddik* in order to unite his soul with that of the departed, while repeating certain permutations of divine names and reciting prayers.

The practice was founded upon the belief that the devotee shared the same 'soul root' as the *zaddik*, and that by performing the correct *yihudim*, with the *zaddik*'s help, he could reunite with that 'soul root'. Souls from the same root formed a 'soul group'. The underlying belief included acceptance of the doctrine of reincarnation, in which the same soul is reborn in order to complete its spiritual journey and attain perfection. Luria taught that souls belong to particular 'soul groups', which came into existence at the time of creation. According to Luria, souls were at one time part of the primal Adam – the *Adam Kadmon*. Adam's sin and banishment from the Garden of Eden symbolizes the scattering of the primal Light into the creation, and souls that were originally a part of the primal Adam scattered in different directions, forming groups. Those who came to the earth belong to a number of 'soul groups', of which the members are more deeply related to each other than to blood-family ancestors because they share a metaphysical ancestry going back to the beginning of creation. *Zaddiks* of one group are able to help other members of the same group raise their souls from the material world:

The knowledge of one's soul ancestry – knowledge that Isaac Luria was able to give to his disciples – was thus of absolutely crucial importance

to them. It is precisely this affinity of souls that constitutes the basis for the communion of souls at the grave. Because of their natural kinship, through intense concentration, the soul of the adept can arouse the corresponding aspect of soul of the *zaddik* (the master).

Lawrence Fine, Physician of the Soul, PSHC p.270

The *yihudim* taught by Luria involved repetition and contemplation of particular divine ‘names’. These ‘names’ are rearrangements of the letters and words of the *Torah* (*Pentateuch*) into incomprehensible syllables – non-rational arrangements of the Hebrew letters – which are then regarded as ‘names’ of God. In Hebrew, letters and therefore words are assigned a numerical value, and finding equivalences between the sums of the numerical values of the letters comprising these ‘names’ was considered a part of the process of finding meaning and order in them, and thereby advancing one’s understanding of God.

Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, assigned sequentially. The first nine letters are numbered from 1 to 9 in steps of 1; the next nine from 10 to 90 in steps of 10; and the remaining nine from 100 to 900 in steps of 100. This comprises a total of 22 numbers for the basic Hebrew letters, plus 5 additional numbers for letter forms used when these letters fall at the end of a word. Summing the numerical values of letters gives a numerical value to words, phrases and sentences, which can then be compared and further manipulated with the intention of discovering equivalences and correspondences. Thus, *yod* is 10, *yod aleph* is 11 (10+1) and *yod bet* is 12 (10+2); *kaf* is 20 and *kaf bet* is 22; *lamad* is 30, and so on. Manipulating the letters results in new words with new meanings.

It was believed that through these *yihudim*, the practitioner was uncovering and contemplating on the true and secret Name of God, hidden within the *Torah* and permeating it. According to this teaching, not only had God emanated His power through light, in the form of the *sefirot*, but he had manifested it through language – the Voice, Utterance, Word, or Name of God.

The ‘names’ used in these practices were understood to correspond to the ideal and harmonious configurations (*parzufim*) of the *sefirot* in the inner realms of creation. The purpose of the *yihudim* was to restore harmony among the *sefirot*, to bring unity to the tensions or opposing polarities that had come into being between the *sefirot*. A state of harmony among them was believed to represent the totality and true essence of the name of God (*Yahweh*).

Through the unification of opposites in this way, it was intended that the practitioner should experience the outpouring (*shefa*) of divine energy and achieve a level of prophetic inspiration. This inspiration was supposed to raise him to a spiritual level where he could act as a channel for the departed *zaddik* with whose ‘soul root’ he had united.

In addition to repeating the verbal formulae of the *yihudim*, a meditator might also visualize particular parts of his body as corresponding to particular *sefirot* and divine names, attempting in this way to raise his body

consciousness to the higher planes. By linking the names to each other by combining their letters, it was thought that a practitioner could unite the *sefirot* with each other and himself with them.

From a number of accounts, it is clear that the practitioners of *yihudim* and other kabbalistic exercises succeeded in achieving some degree of concentration and spiritual progress. Some wrote of hearing inner voices and experiencing the transmission of automatic speech. Some saw visions of inner light and experienced various degrees of inner bliss.

A two-part example provided by Ḥayyim Vital, a close disciple of Isaac Luria, demonstrates the complexity and almost incomprehensibility of these *yihudim* to one who has not studied the methods. Adding to the complexity, in the last line of the first *yihud*, Luria makes a play on words with the letter/word *yod*, which has the numerical value of 10 and is the first letter in God's name *YHWH*:

This is a unification (*yihud*) of (the *sefirot* of) *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom)
and *Binah* (Understanding):
Meditate on the name *YHWH* (*Yahweh*) in (the *sefirah* of) *Ḥokhmah*;
Then meditate on the name *AHYH* (*Ahyeh*) in (the *sefirah* of) *Binah*.
Now bind the two names together,
meditating on the combination, which is *YAHWYHH*.
This is the upper union (*yihud*).

Then meditate on the Name that unites the two.
This is *Av* (Father) (with the value of 72),
which is the tetragrammaton (*YHWH*) expanded with *yods*, (thus):

YHWH = YOD HY WYW HY

This expansion has a numerical value of 72, the same as that of the *sefirah* of *Ḥesed* (Love). This is the upper *Ḥesed*, which brings about the higher union (*yihud*).

Ḥayyim Vital, Sha'ar Ruah ha-Kodesh, SRKV p.110, in MKAK pp.236–37

He is saying that by expanding *YHWH* to a value of 72, it becomes equivalent to the *sefirah* of *Ḥesed*, which also has a value of 72. This means that *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom) and *Binah* (Understanding) become equivalent to *Ḥesed*. He also intimates that there are two levels of *Ḥesed*, upper and lower.

The practitioner is then instructed to meditate with *YHWH* visualized in the various other *sefirot*, expanding the name of God in the same way. The process is difficult to understand and becomes increasingly complex, but it is a way of trying to associate God's name with all the *sefirot*.

The later *ḥasidim* adopted a less complex approach to *yihudim*. Rabbi Judah Leib Alter of Ger (1847–1904), one of the most inspired of the later Hasidic rabbis, explained the deepest level of meaning of the prayer, “Hear, O Israel:

‘The Lord our God, the Lord (*Yahweh*) is One.’” This prayer is regarded as the embodiment of the monotheism taught by the patriarch Abraham. Rabbi Judah explains that the entire creation “is God Himself” and that by reciting this prayer, one is invoking the truth that there is one power, one God, which is immanent in creation:

The proclamation of oneness that we declare each day in saying, “Hear, O Israel, . . .” and so forth, needs to be understood as it truly is. . . . That which is entirely clear to me, . . . based on the holy writings of great kabbalists, I am obligated to reveal to you. . . . The meaning of “*Yahweh* is One” is not that He is the only God, negating other gods (though this too is true!), but the meaning is deeper than that: there is no being other than Him. (This is true) even though it seems otherwise to most people. . . . Everything that exists in the world, spiritual and physical, is God Himself.

Judah Leib Alter of Ger, Oẓar Ma’amraim u-Mikhtavim, SOMM p.75, in EKTG p.22

See also: **gematria** (8.4), **hashba’ot**, **hazkarat shemot**, **hitbodedut**, **kavanot**, **yihud** (8.1), **zeruf**.

1. *Deuteronomy* 6:4.

yǐnjū (C) *Lit.* residing (*jū*) hidden (*yǐn*); dwelling in secrecy, living in seclusion; hence, a hermit. Daoist practitioners who carry out their inner spiritual practices in seclusion. See **yǐnshì** (7.1).

yog(a) (S/H) *Lit.* that which unites, joins, attaches, or yokes; from the Sanskrit, *yug* (to join); cognate with the English ‘yoke’; that which unites the soul to God; from a root with the same meaning as ‘religion’, itself derived from the Latin *religare* (to tie up, to bind together, from *re* + *ligare*, to bind), and hence, that which binds back or unites the soul to God. Both Latin and Sanskrit are members of the Indo-Aryan group of languages, which includes Greek and many other languages in the East and West. This explains the similarity between and the similar derivation of many words in these languages.

Yoga refers to any of a number of practical Indian disciplines, having as their goal the direct experience of transcendent and higher states of consciousness. By means of *yoga*, understanding is gained of the true self and its relationship to Reality, leading ultimately to union of the soul with its divine Source, and its freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Incidental goals or attainments of *yoga* include physical health and mental well-being, balance and vigour, self-awareness, freedom from ill health, long life, knowledge of death, knowledge of the past and future, mystic or higher perception of the hows and whys of

creation both on individual and cosmic scales, and – through concentration of the mind – the attainment of miraculous powers (*riddhis* and *siddhis*).

Although popularly conceived in the West as physical exercises, *yoga* is a great deal more. *Yoga* is a general term referring to a wide spectrum of practices involving particular ways of life and attitudes towards life, physical postures, self-discipline, inner concentration, meditation, and so on. *Yoga* represents not only the mystical side of Hindu philosophy, but the acknowledged and traditional source of the understanding upon which Hindu philosophy is founded. Much of Hindu sacred literature, including the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, is believed to have been written by advanced practitioners of *yoga*. *Shiva*, one of the great Hindu deities, is traditionally regarded as the original yogi and ascetic who discovered the techniques of *yoga*, and taught them to humankind.

In this respect, the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions stand apart from the three Semitic religions. Although Judaism, Christianity and Islam all have their mystical traditions, Moses, the Jewish prophets, Jesus, and Muḥammad – although they were most probably mystics – are not generally understood to have been so. In Hinduism, *yoga* is understood as the traditional and mystic path to realization of the Reality that underlies the religion. Although *yoga* is only one of the six schools of Indian philosophy, the other schools all acknowledge their debt to the great yogis who have had experiences resulting in the descriptions of Reality upon which their philosophical systems have been based.

Yoga is essentially a means for personal development and the exploration of consciousness. Mind, as it is understood in *yoga*, includes all internal functions such as emotions, memory, intellect, thought, reason, and so on. If there are exercises that strengthen, energize and tone the physical body, then there must be mental exercises that strengthen, energize, and balance the mind. Since human beings experience themselves as physical and mental beings, it is reasonable to conclude that personal inner development must start with the development of the mind. For this reason, Indian mystics have been unanimous in describing *yoga* as a means of controlling the mind. Patañjali, author of the *Yoga Sūtras*, the traditional *yoga* text, begins by saying:

Yoga is the cessation (*nirodha*) of the waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛtti*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:2

In this context, *nirodha* means restraint, confinement and control, leading to cessation or stilling of the mind. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* likewise describes *yoga* as the control of both the mind and the senses that distract the mind:

When the five instruments of knowledge (the senses) are still,
together with the mind, and when the intellect does not move –
That is called the supreme state.

This, the firm control of the senses, is what is called *yoga*.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3.10–11, U1 pp.184–85

The *Bhagavad Gītā* provides a longer definition, emphasizing that practitioners should control their body, mind and speech, eat lightly, live in a pure and secluded place, and relinquish sensual pleasures. They should be tranquil in mind and free from attachment, pride, egotism, lust, anger, and a material outlook on life:¹

When the trained mind remains
fixed in the Spirit (*Ātman*) alone,
free from all longing for things desired,
then it can be said to have attained spiritual communion.

The flame of a lamp that is sheltered
from the wind does not flicker;
This example may be compared to the mind of a *yogī*
that is well-controlled
and in communion with the Spirit (*Ātman*).

That state in which the mind (*chitta*),
controlled by the practice of *yoga*, finds rest –
In which the spirit, by the Spirit,
dwells in the joy of knowing the Spirit –
That state in which the *yogī* experiences the endless joy
that is beyond the senses,
but can be known by the purified understanding (*buddhi*) –
That state in which there is no wavering from the Truth –
Obtaining which, no other gain is considered greater –
Established in which,
even serious troubles cause no wavering –
Know that complete detachment from suffering
to be what is known as *yoga*.
Such *yoga* should be practised
with determination and an untiring mind.

Bhagavad Gītā 6:18–23

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, a yogi of more recent times, writes:

Yoga is an art, a method of wrestling with your own mind, it is a process by which you free your mind from limitations and, in this final state of liberation, you gain more knowledge, light, peace, tranquillity, understanding, wisdom, and infinite joy.

Yoga should pave the way to self-mastery, self-discipline, self-control and highest discovery.

Yoga is a science of consciousness.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Yoga from Shore to Shore, YSSS

Guru Nānak, who taught the *yoga* of the Sound Current (*Shabd yoga*) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, advises:

Nānak says, to die while living:

practise such a *yoga*.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 730, AGC

In order to develop and progress in any sphere of life, one must possess a healthy, balanced mind. This is even more important than a healthy body. *Yoga* is a means for providing this integrated personality.

In order to study and understand any subject, one must have the ability to relax and to concentrate. Just a few minutes' practice of yogic meditation every day, or even the physical exercises of *haṭha yoga*, will lead to a relaxed and more concentrated frame of mind. Since modern life leads so easily to stress and to a fragmented, scattered mind, the techniques of *yoga* are as relevant now as they ever have been. *Yoga* offers a way of maintaining composure under the most stressful of circumstances; of developing the courage, certainty and understanding to face life with grace. Life and death, good fortune and tragedy, gain and loss, honour and insult, joy and sorrow are all taken in one's stride. The true yogi remains balanced and cheerful whatever the circumstances.

Even when *yoga* has lead to the heights of spiritual attainment and inner bliss, it does not make a person ineffective in the world. On the contrary, the mind and body are energized and focused in a powerful fashion. There is no stronger and more dynamic force in this world than a practical mystic.

There are a number of schools of *yoga*, developed from the varying needs, personalities, motivations and goals of individual temperaments. All schools, however, have a code of high moral, ethical and physical conduct, and most advise the adoption of a simple balanced diet, traditionally a vegetarian one. All advocate practices for mind control and spiritual development, except *haṭha yoga* when understood as a purely physical regime. In fact, serious practitioners of *haṭha yoga* usually regard it as a sound basis for the practice of other, meditational forms of *yoga*.

Meditative practices generally include the repetition (*japa* or *smaraṇa*) of sacred words or prayers (*mantras*). This is known as *japa yoga* or *mantra yoga*. However, the focus of attention varies from school to school. Some, like *rāja yoga*, start by focusing the attention on the centres or *chakras* below the eye centre, and try to work their way up to the eye centre (*ājñā chakra*) and beyond. *Rāja yoga* is also called Patañjali's *yoga* or *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. Others *yogas*, like *Shabd yoga*, which aims for spiritual ascent by listening to the music of the creative power, begin at the eye centre and try to ascend from there into the astral and higher regions. Similarly, *nāda yoga* is a development of *rāja yoga* in which the practitioner, having reached the eye centre, seeks to ascend higher with the help of the inner sound (*nāda*).

In those systems that teach concentration below the eye centre, mental focus is generally aided by concentration on the breathing (*prāṇāyāma* or *prāṇa yoga*). *Kuṇḍalinī yoga*, a practice derived from tantrism, is essentially the same as *rāja yoga*, involving the awakening of the subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) in the lowest *chakra*, and following its ascent to the ‘sky’ of the body (*chidākāsha*), just above the eye centre, and thence through the *brahma-randhra* in the top of the head, to the *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’).

Many terms are common to the various forms of *yoga*. Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) on a *mantra*, for instance, leads to *dhyāna* (contemplation), which leads on to absorption (*samādhi*) in the object of contemplation. This is also known as *laya yoga*.

There are some *yoga* traditions that are regarded as being aspects of other *yogas*. These include *bhakti yoga* (*yoga* of devotion), *karma yoga* (*yoga* of action), *kriyā yoga* (*yoga* of action), and *jñāna yoga* (*yoga* of knowledge).

In *bhakti yoga*, practitioners focus their lives and devotion on a personified form of God, such as Kṛiṣṇa or the devotee’s *guru*. Results vary according to the individual’s attitude and receptivity.

Karma yoga (*yoga* of action) emphasizes the need to behave selflessly in life, devoting the fruits of all actions to God. The *karma yogī* remains serene and detached under all circumstances. He acts according to his best intentions and discrimination, but leaves the results to God. This attitude is essential for success in any form of *yoga* meditation.

Kriyā yoga means the same as *karma yoga*, though the term also means quite simply ‘the practice of *yoga*’. It is in this sense that the term appears in Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras*.²

Jñāna yoga or *gyāna yoga* (*yoga* of knowledge) is held to be the way of the studious, discriminating intellectual. But since *jñāna* is also described as mystic knowledge, *jñāna* can also refer to all forms of *yoga* that result in mystic knowledge or gnosis.

As traditionally understood, *yoga* is a system distinct from Buddhism, except perhaps in the world of tantrism, especially Tibetan Buddhism. Developing alongside each other in North India and Nepal during the eighth to twelfth centuries, tantric Buddhism borrowed significantly from Indian *yoga* and *tantra*. Practices involving control of the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy) and the use of *mudrās* (gestures) and *mantras* (verbal formulae) and so on are a widespread feature of Tibetan Buddhism. The term *yoga* is also used for various meditational practices and schools of tantric Buddhist meditation, including *anuttara-yoga tantra* (unexcelled *yoga tantra*), *mahāyoga* (great *yoga*), *anuyoga* (further *yoga*), *atiyoga* (supreme *yoga*), *devatā yoga* (deity *yoga*), *guru yoga*, and the six *yogas* or *dharma*s of Nāropa. The eighth-century Padmasambhava, credited with having introduced tantric Buddhism into Tibet and with founding the Red sect or *Nyingma* (‘Old Order’), was a follower of the *Yogāchāra* (‘Practice of *Yoga*’) school of Indian *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

In early Buddhism, *yoga* and derivatives of the word were used by the Buddha in the *Dhammapada*, where they are general terms for meditation or its absence – but no details of technique are provided:

He who gives himself to distractions (*ayoga*),
and does not apply himself to meditation (*yoga*),
abandoning his own interest, and seeking pleasure,
will envy the one who exerts himself in meditation (*yoga*).

Dhammapada 16:1

And:

From meditation (*yoga*) springs wisdom,
without meditation (*ayoga*) wisdom wanes.
Understanding this two-way path of rise and fall,
a person should act so that his wisdom increases.

Dhammapada 20:10

Yoga in Jainism

In Jain philosophy, the term *yoga* is used in three main contexts. Firstly, *yoga* refers to Jain meditation (*dhyāna*), which is akin to the *yoga* of the better-known Indian yogic and tantric traditions. It implies control of the mind and senses through inner concentration and meditation. *Yoga* has been acknowledged by Jain philosophy for many centuries. The *Shvetāmbara* writer Haribhadra (c.7th–8th) wrote three books (*Yogabindu*, *Yogaḍṛishṭi Samuchchaya*, and *Yogashataka*) comparing Jain philosophy and methods of spiritual practice to the Indian *yoga* systems of his day, presenting a perspective on *yoga* in a way that was acceptable to Jains. In his *Yogasāra-prābhṛita*, the tenth-century Āchārya Amitagati also writes of *yoga* in a positive manner:

That *yoga* which gives birth to the wisdom of a realized soul has been described as *yoga* by those *yogīs* who have washed away their *karmas* by means of such *yoga*.

Yoga is the way that leads the soul to the attainment of the wisdom known to a pure soul that has been stripped of all that is other than soul. Such rare wisdom of the pure soul is possible only upon the destruction of the obscuring *karmas*. *Yoga* therefore performs a dual function of destroying *karmas* and bestowing realization of the pure soul.

The supreme bliss generated by *yoga* is free from the scourge of sensuality, is identical to tranquillity, is stable, exists within the soul itself, and grants freedom from birth and death.

Together with the destruction of *karma* and the pure soul's attaining realization of itself, *yoga* also grants the *yogī* the additional gift

of bliss... These features mark a final release of the soul from the turmoils of the worldly existence.

Āchārya Amitagati, Yogasāra-prābhṛita 9:10–11; cf. YPAA pp.212–13

From the same era, the eighth-century Jinasena says in his *Ādi Purāṇa*:

Yoga, dhyāna, samādhi, nirodha (cessation), *svānta-nigraha* (control of the mind) and *antaḥ-saṃlīnatā* (inner absorption), etc. are all synonyms for meditation (*dhyāna*).

Jinasena, Ādi Purāṇa 21:12, APJ1 p.475

Secondly, *yoga* refers to the *shrāvakāchāra* (conduct of laypeople), the spiritual code of conduct and spiritual practice laid down for Jain *shrāvakas* (laymen) and *shrāvikās* (laywomen). In this sense, *yoga* is equivalent to *samyak-chāritra* (right conduct), but in a wider sense includes *samyag-darshana* (right faith, right belief), *samyag-jñāna* (right knowledge), and *samyak-tapas* (right self-discipline). This usage is exemplified by the eleventh-century Hemachandra in his *Yoga Shāstra*, although there is naturally some overlap between the first and second meanings of *yoga*. Early medieval India saw a burgeoning interest in yogic and tantric practices, with a concomitant output of yogic, tantric and allied treatises, so it is no surprise that a significant number of Jain *shrāvakāchāra* texts also date from this period. In a Jain context, the purpose of such *yoga* or *shrāvakāchāra* is as a preparation for the life of a mendicant, with its complete focus on meditation and the spiritual life.

The third – and entirely different – meaning of *yoga*, as described in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*³ and other Jain texts,⁴ is ‘activity’, ‘vibration’, or ‘vibrational activity’ – at both the physical or mental level. According to the Jain theory of *karma*, *yoga*, as vibrational activity, is the means by which subtle karmic matter is attracted into the soul. This results in human passions (*kashāyas*) and weaknesses that bind karmic matter to the soul. Jain analysts have categorized fifteen forms of vibrational activity in body, mind and speech, all of which cause an influx of karmic matter. Four are of speech, four are of the mind, and seven are related to the gross and subtle bodies. Activity in body, mind and speech are known, respectively, as *kāya-yoga* (activity of body), *manoyoga* (activity of mind), and *vachana-yoga* (activity of speech).

The four modes of vibration or activity of speech and of mind are: true, false, mixed true and false, and neither true nor false. The seven kinds of *kāya-yoga* arise from interaction between the five kinds of body (*sharīra*): *audārika-sharīra* (gross body), the material bodies of human beings, animals, birds, plants, and other living organisms; *vaikriya-sharīra* (transformation body), the bodies of heavenly and hellish beings; *āhāraka-sharīra* (translocation body), a body assumed by advanced souls, which can be detached from the physical body in order for the soul to visit a location where a *Tīrthankara*

is presently teaching, for the purpose of seeking guidance; *kārmaṇa-sharīra* (*karma* body), a body consisting of karmic matter or karmic particles attached to the soul, which is especially active in the period between death and rebirth; and *taijasa-sharīra* (body of light), a subtle or etheric body made of subtle life energy, which provides the organized bodily energy required for everyday bodily function. The seven kinds of *kāya-yoga* are activities of the first four bodies, plus activity of the *audārika* and *vaikriya* mixed with that of the *kārmaṇa* body, and activity of the *āhāraka* body with the *audārika* body.

Yoga as activity appears in descriptions of the fourteen stages (*guṇasthānas*) of spiritual progress from materiality to omniscience. The penultimate *guṇasthāna* is called *sayogi-kevali* (oneness together with activity), in which all passions are destroyed and all *karma* is eliminated. Only *aghātiyā* (secondary) *karma* remains, which keeps the soul bound to the body for as long as the *karma* of the present lifetime has not ended. The fourteenth and final *guṇasthāna* is called *ayogi-kevali* (oneness without activity), in which the remaining *karma* that keeps the soul in the body is destroyed, and the soul attains liberation, no longer bound by *karma* and the body, and free from the risk of further incarnations. This state is said to last only momentarily, after which the soul rises to its heavenly abode (*siddhaloka*, *īśhat-prāgbhārābhūmi*), which is above all the heavenly realms, at the very pinnacle of the occupied universe (*lokākāśha*), where the soul dwells for all eternity in the blissful experience of its own consciousness.

Understood as vibrational activity, *yoga* is also one of five mental imperfections or aberrations identified by Jain scholars as causes of bondage, viz. *mithyātva* (wrong faith, incorrect view of Reality), *avirati* (lack of self-discipline), *pramāda* (heedlessness), *kashāya* (passions), and *yoga*.

Considering *yoga* as a generic term for activity, Jain writers also speak of *yogas* such as: *pramāda-yoga* (heedless activity), which covers all activity performed under the influence of the passions; *pramatta-yoga* (thoughtless activity), which is speech that is motivated by any of the passions; and *shubha-yoga* and *ashubha-yoga*, which are activities regarded as good or bad and which result in good or bad *karma*. *Shubha-yogas* are subdivided into those of body, speech and mind, viz. charity, self-discipline, and service with the body; true and sweet speech; and benevolence, wishing well of others, and good meditation, which are activities of the mind. *Ashubha-yogas* are likewise listed as causing harm to others by violence, theft, etc.; false, harsh, or hurtful speech; and thinking ill of others.

Yoga is also a part of the term *upayoga*, which means an act or activity leading to a desired objective. *Upayoga* is that which characterizes a living organism and distinguishes it from inert matter; it is the means by which an incarnate soul (*jīva*), human or otherwise, perceives and knows.

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga, dhyāna, haṭha yoga, upayoga** (8.1).

1. See also *Bhagavad Gītā* 18:51–53.
2. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 2:1–2.
3. Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 6:1–5, 8:1–3.
4. Amṛitachandra, *Purushārtha-siddhyupāya* 91, 99–105, *PSAS* pp.45, 47–49; Kundakunda, *Pañchāstikāyasāra* 148, *PBCK* p.121; Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 2:53, 3:87–88, 100, 109–10, 134, *AKKS* pp.51, 75–76, 84, 91, 101–2; Kundakunda, *Ashṭapāhuḍa* 5:117, *APAK*; Nemichandra, *Gommaṣasāra*, *Jīva-kāṇḍa* 6:142, 9:216–70, *GJKN* pp.96, 131–57; *Samansuttam* 603–5.

yogābhyās(a) (S/H) *Lit.* the practice (*abhyās*) of *yoga*; generally applied to the practice of *ashṭāṅga yoga*. See **abhyāsa**.

yoga shāstra (S/H) *Lit.* teaching (*shāstra*) of *yoga*; the teaching, philosophy, and practice of *yoga*; the body of knowledge (*shāstra*) relating to *yoga*; a general name for the field or discipline of *yoga*; one of the *shaṭ-darshanas* or six systems of Hindu philosophy; also, a treatise on the subject of *yoga* by Patañjali, more popularly known as the *Yoga Sūtras*.

The *Shiva Saṃhitā* regards *yoga* as the philosophy and practice with the highest spiritual goal:

Having studied all the *shāstras* and having pondered over them thoroughly, again and again, this *yoga shāstra* has been found to be the only true and firm doctrine.

Since, by *yoga*, all this verily is known as a certainty, every effort should be made to acquire it. Where is the necessity of any other doctrine?

This *yoga shāstra*, now being declared by us, is a very secret doctrine, only to be revealed to a high-souled, pious devotee throughout the three worlds.

Shiva Saṃhitā 1:17–19; cf. *SSV* p.3

Yoga Shāstra is also the name of a text by the Jain āchārya Hemachandra (c.1088–1173), a treatise on the yogic and tantric practices of his time, seen from a Jain perspective.

See also: **ashṭāṅga yoga**, **yoga**.

yogash chitta-vṛitti nirodhaḥ (S/H) *Lit.* *yoga* is cessation (*nirodha*) of the waves (*vṛitti*) of the mind (*chitta*); Patañjali's definition of *yoga*, with which he starts his *Yoga Sūtras*. In this context, *nirodha* means restraint, confinement and control, leading to cessation or stilling of the mind.

See also: **ashṭāṅga yoga, chitta-vṛitti** (8.1).

yoga tantra (S), **rnal 'byor gyi rgyud** (T) A small category of esoteric or tantric Buddhist texts, probably originating during the late seventh to early eighth centuries, that emphasize the visualization of deities (*yi dam*) and *maṇḍalas*, control of breathing and the subtle life energies (*prāṇāyāma*), repetition of *mantras*, and sometimes sexual *yoga*; the third of a common three-part classification of tantric practices described by the three 'new' schools (*Kagyü*, *Sakya*, and *Geluk*) of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries CE; the fourth of the nine-vehicle (*navayāna*) stages on the spiritual path according to the older *Nyingma* ('Old Translations') school, who trace their origins to the eighth-century teacher and translator of Sanskrit texts, Padmasambhava. Of the 2,000 or so tantric texts, only about fifteen are designated *yoga tantra* texts, according to the Tibetan *Kanjur* collection. With the introduction of *prāṇāyāma*, the practices of the *yoga tantras* are of a more interior and contemplative nature than those of the preceding class, the *charyā tantras*. Most prominent among the *yoga tantras* is the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha Sūtra*.

The master Ānandagarbha (c.C9th–10th) says in his *Tattvāloka-piṇḍārtha* ('Epitome of the Illumination of the Real'):

This *tantra* is called *yoga tantra* because it emphasizes contemplative meditation.

Ānandagarbha, Tattvāloka-piṇḍārtha, TOH2510, in NST1 p.272

Like the first two categories of *tantra* – the *kriyā* (ritual) and *charyā* (practice) – the *yoga tantras* relate to deities and celestial *bodhisattvas* drawn from *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. As in the *charyā tantras*, the celestial *buddha* Vairochana figures prominently as the primal, cosmic *buddha* who pervades all and is the source of all. Also commonly encountered are the other four *dhyāni buddhas* of tantric Buddhism – Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. Other celestial *buddhas* also make their appearance in the *yoga tantras*, where they are organized into five or six 'buddha-families'. Unlike the *kriyā tantras*, the primary goal of the practices promoted in the *yoga tantras* is enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of transmigration.¹

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra, navayāna**.

1. See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought, BTIT* pp.156–57.

yù (C) *Lit.* to heal, to become well. See **liáo**.

yukti (S), **jukti**, **jugti** (H/Pu), **jugat** (Pu) *Lit.* union, connection, combination, junction; reasoning, inference, deduction, argument; technique, method, way, application, usage; mystically, a particular technique of meditation.

In the *Upanishads* and *Advaita Vedānta*, *yukti* means reasoning. It is said that the Truth is realized through *shruti* (hearing), *yukti* (reasoning), and *anubhava* (personal experience):

In the realization of the *ātman*, the existence-knowledge-bliss absolute, through the breaking of one's connection with the bondage of *avidyā* (ignorance), the scriptures (*śāstras*), reasoning (*yukti*), and the words of the master are the proofs, while one's own experience (*anubhava*) earned by concentrating the mind is another proof.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 474, VCSM p.177

Yukti is also used in the sense of reasoning in Buddhist texts, as in Nāgārjuna's title, *Yukti-shaṣṭikā-kārikā* ('Sixty Verses on Reasoning').

Indian *sants* have used *jukti* for the "true technique", the most effective method of conquering the mind, gaining release from birth and death, and returning to God. This method, they say, is through contact with the "inner melody" of the divine Word (*Shabd*) and the blessings of a true master (*satguru*). As Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar (1674–1780) maintains:

The *jogī* who knows the true technique (*jukti*)
is devoted to pure wisdom.
By listening to the inner melody, the attention turns inward,
and the blemishless Lord who knows no bounds is revealed. . . .

This is the true technique (*jukti*) of *yoga* (*jog*),
the secrets of which are explained by the *satguru*, says Dariyā.
It enables the soul to enter the inner regions
by letting the soul pass through the eye of the needle.

Dariyā Sāhib, Shabd 8:8, 17, DG1 pp.109, 111; cf. DSSK p.201

The *gurus* whose writings are preserved in the *Ādi Granth* also insist that this method (*jugat*) is learnt from a *satguru*:

O Nānak, meeting the *satguru*,
one comes to know the perfect way (*jugat*).
While laughing, playing, dressing and eating,
he is liberated (*mukat*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 522, AGK

I came to the *guru*, to learn the way (*jugat*) of *yoga* (*jog*).
The *satguru* has revealed it to me through the Word (*Sabad*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 208, AGK

Mīrābāi says that the yogi does not know the effective way to find God:

You have worn ochre-coloured robes, left your home,
and become a renunciant (*sanyāsī*).
You have become a *jogī* (yogi),
but you do not know the real method (*jugti*).
Therefore, you will return again to this earth.

Mīrābāi, Shabdāvalī, Chetāvanī kā ang, Shabd 3:3, MBS p.2

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, who writes extensively of meditation on the divine Word, adds:

Rādhā Swāmī has struck with a sharp sword:
with the proper method (*jukti*), the mind was killed.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 4:4.13, SBP p.40

The unique method (*jukti*) has now been revealed:
the *Vedas* and other holy books do not know of it.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:12.8, SBP p.162

yùqì (C) *Lit.* mobilizing (*yùn*) the life energy (*qì*); circulating the *qì*; a form of Daoist exercise intended to enhance health and well-being.

Daoist physical exercises include breathing exercises that are intended to promote good health and physical longevity. In many schools of Daoism, a healthy body is regarded as a good foundation for successful spiritual practice. Relative to the amount of effort expended, no other health practice is deemed capable of producing such dramatic and life-changing results as proper, conscious breathing. Daoist techniques of full, deep and relaxed breathing are intended to dissolve and release energy blockages in the body and mind, to improve the functioning of internal organs, and to enhance spiritual awareness. Daoist breathing techniques are similar to Indian *prāṇāyāma* systems, the two main differences being that Daoist breathing exercises are performed with both nostrils simultaneously and do not involve retention or restraint of the breath.

See also: **dǎoyǐn, yǎng**.

yuwipi (Lakota) *Lit.* a spirit-calling ceremony in which a *wichasha wakan* (holy man, shaman) is restrained with strips of leather and rolled tightly in a blanket, awaiting the arrival of spirits to release him; by extension, a shaman who performs *yuwipis*. The ceremony is held in a pitch dark room, so that the lights of the spirits will enter and communicate with the holy man who is lying on the floor. In the darkness, the spirits free the holy man and tell him how to cure or help the person who has requested the ceremony.

The American painter and writer Thomas Mails (1920–2001), who developed a long-term association with Native North American traditions, depicts the scene. Although Mails stresses the genuineness of the results, his language clearly suggests that the medicine man's release does not depend on spirits:

The *yuwipi* ceremony is . . . used for healing, divining, and for finding lost persons or objects. A medicine man who performs this nighttime ritual builds a special altar on the floor of a house and allows the spectators to tie his hands securely behind his back, then wrap him head and foot in a thick blanket so that he is entirely covered like a mummy. Ropes are tied around the blankets to hold it in place. He is then laid out full length on the altar, while the other participants sit in a tightly packed circle around him and hold hands so they will know if anyone moves. The lights are extinguished, and the medicine man prays audibly so that everyone can hear him. After a specified period of time, the lights are turned on, and without anyone having helped him, the *yuwipi* man will be sitting there free of his bindings with the blanket neatly folded beside him and his hands folded in his lap. He never reveals how he does this, and when asked always claims that the spirits come and release him.

During the time he remains wrapped and in the dark, the medicine man may pray for help in determining the cause of an illness he has been asked to cure, and in learning the roots or herbs that will heal it. Or, if he has been asked to find a lost object or person, he will pray for guidance regarding that. Surprising results are common, and there are many testimonies to the truth of this, including those given by non-Indians who have participated and been helped in amazing ways. In my personal experiences, these affirmations include those of white nurses and other white professional people.

Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM p.188

John Lame Deer (1903–1976), a Lakota holy man, describes the ritual from the perspective of the enwrapped shaman:

Imagine darkness so intense and so complete that it is almost solid, flowing around you like ink, covering you like a velvet blanket. A blackness which cuts you off from the everyday world, which forces you to withdraw deep into yourself, which makes you see with your heart instead of with your eyes. You can't see, but your eyes are opened. You are isolated, but you know that you are part of the Great Spirit, united with all living beings.

And out of this utter darkness comes the roaring of drums, the sound of prayers, the high-pitched songs. And among all these sounds your ear catches the voices of the spirits – tiny voices, ghostlike,

whispering to you from unseen lips. Lights are flitting through the room, almost touching you, little flashes of lightning coming at you from the darkness. Rattles are flying through the air, knocking against your head and shoulders. You feel the wings of birds brushing your face, feel the light touch of a feather on your skin. And always you hear the throbbing drums filling the darkness with their beating, filling the empty spaces inside yourself, making you forget the things that clutter up your mind, making your body sway to their rhythm.

And across the black nothingness you feel the presence of the man (*i.e.* himself) lying face down in the centre of the room, his fingers laced together with rawhide, his body tied and wrapped in a blanket, a living mummy, through whom the spirits are talking to you. This is what you experience during a *yuwipi* ceremony.

John Lane Deer, Seeker of Visions, LDSV p.191

As Mails indicates, *yuwipis* are requested by someone in need. The intention may be to heal a sick person, to seek visions and spiritual guidance, to know the future, to get help in making a decision, or to find something lost or stolen. Lane Deer explains that if the request is made rightly, the holy man cannot refuse:

A *yuwipi* ceremony starts when someone, a man or woman, has a problem and needs help. That someone could be sick, or he could be looking for a lost relative. He sends a peace pipe, loaded with Bull Durham (a brand of tobacco), to a *yuwipi* medicine man. If he does this in the right way the medicine man cannot refuse to help him; he must perform the ceremony. Not all medicine men are *yuwipis*; some don't want to be. Being a *yuwipi* involves finding something. This could be a missing person, dead, drowned at the bottom of a river. If the *yuwipi* finds him, he brings grief to the family. Or the something could be a stolen article. The *yuwipi* finds it and everybody is embarrassed, the thief as well as the medicine man and the man who asked him to search for it. Some medicine men shy away from this. I myself used to practise *yuwipi*, but I don't do it anymore. I have passed beyond this stage. But I have taught a number of men to become *yuwipis*, and I will teach more.

John Lane Deer, Seeker of Visions, LDSV pp.195–96

zabuton (J) *Lit.* sitting (*za*) mattress (*futon*); in Zen Buddhism, a square or rectangular floor cushion or padded mat, 70–90 cms in size and around 10 cms thick, used under a smaller, usually round or crescent-shaped cushion called a *zafu*, traditionally made of woven bulrush leaves, 30–40 cms in diameter, up to 15 cms thick; a padded mat on which a meditator sits while practising *zazen* (sitting meditation); the *zafu* raises the hips, which helps the

meditator sit in any of the cross-legged positions with the spine straight, and the *zabuton* cushions the legs, the knees, and ankles. The *zabuton* is just big enough for sitting cross-legged, though it can also be used for the kneeling (*seiza*) posture. Traditionally, the *zafu* raises the buttocks such that the knees, sloping forward, rest on the *zabuton*. Both cushions are traditionally stuffed with kapok fibres or buckwheat husks. A *zabuton* is also called a *zaniku*.

Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the founder of *Sōtō Zen*, describes the two recommended postures for practising *zazen*:

When sitting in *zazen*, wear the *kāshāya* (monk's robe). Place your cushion (*zafu*) (on top of the *zabuton*). The cushion is not placed completely under your crossed legs, but only under the backside. Therefore the underside of your crossed legs is on the mat (*zabuton*), and the cushion (*zafu*) is under the spine. This is the method of sitting used by the *buddhas* and the patriarchs when they sit in *zazen*. Some people sit in the half-lotus posture (*hanka fuza*) and some sit in the full lotus posture (*kekka fuza*). To sit in the full lotus posture put the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. The toes of each foot should be aligned with the thighs, symmetrically not unevenly. To sit in the half-lotus posture just put the left foot on the right thigh. Let the robe and gown hang loosely and make them neat. Place the right hand on the left foot (palm upwards); then place the left hand on the right hand (palm upwards), with the tips of the thumbs touching each other. Keeping the hands like this, hold them close to the body. The point where the two thumbs touch should be placed opposite the navel.

Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, Zazengi, T82 2582:217b–c;

cf. SDT3 (58) p.226, STHT (56) pp.681–82

See also: **zazen**.

zafu (J) *Lit.* sitting (*za*) cushion (*fu*). See **zabuton**.

zazen (J), **zuòchán** (C) *Lit.* to sit (*za*, *zuò*) in meditation (*zen*, *chán*); seated or sitting meditation; *Zen* Buddhist meditation, usually in the lotus posture (J. *kekka fuza*, S. *padmāsana*) or half-lotus posture (J. *hanka fuza*), and generally as a group in the monastery meeting hall (*zendō*); the principal mode of *Zen* meditation, especially in the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* schools; also, metaphorically, being mentally centred or 'seated' within oneself, wherever one may happen to be or whatever one is doing; also, in a broad context, the way of life associated with the practice of *zazen*. The Japanese *zen* is a phonetic rendering of the Chinese *chán*, itself a transcription of the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (meditation, contemplation).

The primary purpose of *zazen* is to free the mind of all thoughts, concepts, and dualistic thinking; to attain inner tranquillity and *samādhi* (concentration); to realize one's own true nature; to see things as they really are; to bring the wisdom attained in meditation into daily life; and ultimately to reach full enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Three main forms of *zazen* are generally practised:

1. *Sūsokukan* (J), *shǔxīguān* (C). *Lit.* breath (*xī*) count (*shǔ*) meditation (*guān*); focusing the attention on the inhalation and exhalation in order to help bring the mind under control and still the otherwise ceaseless flow of distracted thoughts; generally used as a beginners' practice to develop initial concentration as a foundation for *shikantaza* or *kōan* meditation (J. *kannazen*); not universally accepted by *Zen* teachers; a practice derived from the *Theravāda* tradition of mindfulness of breathing (Pa. *ānāpānasatī*) – from which many variations have evolved and which is one of the most popular forms of Buddhist meditation. See **shǔxīguān**.
2. *Kānhuà Chán* (C), *kannazen* (J) *Lit.* meditation (*chán*) by investigation (*kān*) of words (*huà*); meditation on a *kōan* (C. *gōng àn*, a paradoxical anecdote, saying, or riddle) with the intention of reaching enlightenment; a method pioneered by the Chinese *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) *Chán* school and carried forward by the Japanese *Rinzai* school. See **kānhuà Chán**.
3. *Shikantaza* (J), *zhǐguǎn dǎzuò* (C) *Lit.* nothing but (*shikan*) just (*ta*) sitting (*za*); just sitting, nothing more; only attending to sitting; focusing exclusively on sitting; sitting in awareness; *zazen* (sitting meditation) performed in a state of heightened alertness and attention that is free of thoughts, conceptions, images and expectations, and uses no objects, devices or techniques, such as *kōan* contemplation or counting breaths; a *Sōtō Zen* practice, introduced to Japan in the thirteenth century by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the founder of *Sōtō Zen*; also called *mokushō Zen* (C. *mòzhào Chán*), which means silent (*mò*) illumination (*zhào*) meditation. See **shikantaza**.

Zazen can be practised at any time of the day, although various scheduled times are followed by individual monasteries. *Shiji zazen* is the traditional four-times-a-day schedule – in the early morning, morning, afternoon, and dusk; *sanji zazen* is meditation three times a day, in the early morning, afternoon, and dusk; *goya zazen* is the pre-dawn period of meditation, *sōshin zazen* some time after breakfast, *hoji zazen* in the afternoon, and *kōkon zazen* in the evening. A period of intensive meditation, traditionally lasting seven days and seven nights, which takes place in the meditation hall (*zendō*) of a *Rinzai* or *Sōtō* monastery or in a more eclectic *Zen* centre is known as a *sesshin*. Long sessions of *zazen* are generally interspersed every forty-five minutes or so with ten-minute periods of walking meditation (*kinhin*).

Progress in *zazen* is said to develop through three avenues. Firstly, developing the strength and power that comes from concentration (J. *jōriki*, S. *samādhi*); secondly, awakening or enlightenment (*kenshō*), also called *satori*, which may be an initial rather than the full experience; thirdly, bringing that enlightenment and wisdom into daily life (*mujōdō no taigen*).

According to tradition, the originator of *zazen* was the (probably) South Indian monk Bodhidharma, founder of *Chán* Buddhism during the fifth or sixth centuries (CE), which became *Zen* Buddhism in Japan. According to the legend, Bodhidharma spent nine years meditating in front of a cliff near his hermitage or (in some accounts) a cave on Mount Sōng. Traditional pictures of the sage depict him seated in meditation, facing a wall or a cliff. The practice is known as *bìguān* (C. wall gazing, wall contemplation; J. *hekikan*). Echoes of the practice still exist in present times: when novitiates first request entry to some *Zen* monasteries, they are required to demonstrate their aptitude by spending up to three days in isolation, practising *zazen* (seated meditation) while facing a wall. In *Sōtō Zen* monasteries, monks and nuns sit in two long rows facing the side walls, their backs to a central aisle.

Zazen applies especially either to *kōan* meditation (*kannazen*) as practised by the *Rinzai* school or to *shikantaza* (nothing but just sitting), according to the *Sōtō* tradition. Speaking from the *Sōtō* perspective, Eihei Dōgen advises on choosing a suitable place for *zazen* – in this instance, it would seem, outside of a monastery setting:

To practise *Zen* is to sit in *zazen*. For sitting in *zazen* a quiet place is good. Prepare a thick sitting mat. Do not allow wind and smoke to enter. Do not expose it to rain or dew. Set aside an area that is secure for your body. There are the examples of those in the past (*i.e.* the Buddha) who sat on a diamond-hard place, seated on a huge rock upon which he had spread a thick cushion of dry grass. Your sitting place should be lit, not dark, day or night. To be warm in winter and cool in summer is the way. Cast aside all involvements and cease the ten thousand things (*i.e.* all thoughts and activities). Do not exercise your discriminatory mind or weigh and judge your mind's remembrances, concepts, and reflections! Do not try to become a *buddha*. Drop any concern whether you are sitting or lying down. Eat and drink in moderation. Cherish the light of days and the dark of nights. Enjoy sitting in *zazen* as though you were extinguishing a fire upon your head (*i.e.* with the same degree of enthusiasm).

Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, Zazengi, T82 2582:217a–b;

cf. SDT3 (58) pp.225–26, STHT (56) p.681

Having discussed posture (half or full lotus), the use of a mat and cushion, he continues:

You should sit erect, that is, not leaning to the right, inclining to the left, slumping forward, or arching back. You should align your ears with your shoulders and your nose with your navel. Let your tongue rest in your mouth. Breathe through your nose. Your lips and teeth should be touching. Your eyes should remain open, but neither wide open nor narrowly closed.

With body and mind regulated in this manner, exhale once. Sit with the stillness of a mountain, and do not deliberately try to think about anything. How can what anyone is thinking about be based on not deliberately thinking about something? Simply by not making ‘what I am thinking about’ the point of your meditation. This is the real secret of doing *zazen*. *Zazen* is a practice and not something for intellectual study. It is the *Dharma* gate to peace and joy. It is untainted training to realize the Truth.

*Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, Zazengi, T82 2582:217c;
cf. SDT3 (58) p.226, STHT (56) p.682*

Kōshō Uchiyama (1912–1998), abbot of the *Sōtō* Antaiji monastery from 1965 to 1975, speaks of the relationship between posture and the mind within:

It is easy to tell you to aim at the correct posture and leave everything up to that, but it is not so simple to do. Even while we are in the *zazen* position, if we continue our thoughts, we are thinking and no longer doing *zazen*. *Zazen* is not thinking; nor is it sleeping. Doing *zazen* is to be full of life aiming at holding a correct *zazen* posture. If we become sleepy while doing *zazen*, our energy becomes dissipated and our body becomes limp. If we pursue our thoughts, our posture will become stiff. *Zazen* is neither being limp and lifeless nor being stiff; our posture must be full of life and energy. . . .

When we actually do *zazen*, we should be neither sleeping nor caught up in our own thoughts. We should be wide awake, aiming at the correct posture with our flesh and bones. Can we ever attain this? Is there such a thing as succeeding or hitting the mark? Here is where *zazen* becomes unfathomable. In *zazen* we have to vividly aim at holding the correct posture, yet there is no mark to hit! Or at any rate, the person who is doing *zazen* never perceives whether he has hit the mark or not. If the person doing *zazen* thinks his *zazen* is really getting good, or that he has ‘hit the mark’, he is merely *thinking* his *zazen* is good, while actually he has become separated from the reality of his *zazen*. Therefore, we must always aim at doing correct *zazen*, without being concerned with perceiving the mark as having been hit.

This seems like a strange contradiction. Generally, most people think that as long as there is an aim, it is only natural that there will

be a target to hit: precisely because there is a target, we can take aim. However, if we know that there isn't a target, why attempt to aim? This is the usual idea about give-and-take, ordinary calculating behaviour. However, when we do *zazen* we have to let go of our self-centredness and our dealings in relation to others. *Zazen* is just our *whole self doing itself by itself*. *Zazen* does *zazen*. *Zazen* is the act of throwing away the calculating way of thinking that supposes that as long as there is an aim there must be a target. . . .

Here we have to clearly distinguish 'chasing after thoughts and thinking' from 'ideas or thoughts merely occurring'. If a thought occurs during *zazen* and we proceed to chase after it, then we are thinking and not doing *zazen*. Yet this doesn't mean that we are doing *zazen* only when thoughts have entirely ceased to occur.

Kōshō Uchiyama, Opening the Hand of Thought, OHTU pp.46–48

Another *Sōtō* monk and teacher, Shunryu Suzuki (1904–1971), observes that the mental state attained in the practice of *zazen* is to be carried into worldly activity. He, too, emphasizes the significance of posture:

Zazen practice and everyday activity are one thing. We call *zazen* everyday life, and everyday life *zazen*. But usually we think, "Now *zazen* is over, and we will go about our everyday activity." But this is not the right understanding. They are the same thing. We have nowhere to escape. So in activity there should be calmness, and in calmness there should be activity. Calmness and activity are not different. . . .

When you practise *zazen* you should not try to attain anything. You should just sit in the complete calmness of your mind and not rely on anything. Just keep your body straight without leaning over or against something. To keep your body straight means not to rely on anything. In this way, physically and mentally, you will obtain complete calmness. But to rely on something or to try to do something in *zazen* is dualistic and not complete calmness.

Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind – Beginner's Mind, ZMBM pp.118–19, 122

The neuroscientist and *Zen* practitioner James Austin (*b.*1925) writes of his practice of *zazen* in a *Rinzai* monastery and the way in which the meditation comes to colour one's entire perception of life. Having settled oneself in a stable posture and performed some basic awareness of breathing to centre oneself, one should then, according to his *rōshi* (master):

Concentrate on some simple phrase that helps you relax, yet still keeps you focused. Many such phrases come down to us from the *Hàn* dynasty. For example: "White clouds embrace mystical stone." If you use any phrase like this, concentrate only on the general feeling of it.

Forget the words, and do not try to visualize the scenery. When you finally reach that stage of practice when no thoughts are in your mind, you may take on a *kōan*.

Kobori Rōshi, in Zen and the Brain, ZBMC p.65

Austin adds some comments on his own experience:

With practice, *zazen* becomes second nature. The *zendō* routines settle into place; legs and back adjust to the sitting posture; the three-ring circus of thoughts retreats sooner from my brain. Respirations quiet by themselves. Some days nothing flows easily. During others, *kinhin* merges more naturally into and out of sitting *zazen*. Indeed, it strengthens it and becomes less of a distracting interlude. As *zazen* ripens, I begin to experience longer periods of a steady, relaxed awareness. For a neurologist, these thought-free periods are a most unexpected experience. No thoughts? Who would believe that an attentive brain could focus lightly on *nothing!* . . .

Vivid complementary colours enter my vision during *zazen*, particularly in hues of yellow-green, and of pink to reddish purple. Gradually, over the months, these occur less frequently. Solid, wooden feelings of body, lips, and tongue are also less evident. Sluggishness after sitting evolves increasingly into a sense of mental clarity and composure.

Slowly, feelings of calmness and clarity begin subtly to extend themselves out of the *zendō*, entering into life's everyday affairs. It becomes easier to accept unpleasant things. Even when irritated, I have a growing sense of *who* is becoming upset. This leaves more time to develop an objective remedy to improve the situation. Life's central issues assume a higher priority. In earlier years, on vacations in the mountains, I could perceive that this one person is a part of the larger whole in an ongoing now. Now, in the busy streets of Kyoto, I start to enlarge upon this perspective. In parallel, the former sense of being a private isolated self tends to diminish. But all this comes and goes, still mostly at the intellectual level.

James Austin, Zen and the Brain, ZBMC pp.68–69

See also: **bìguān**, **mòzhào Chán**, **zabuton**.

zeruf (He) *Lit.* smelted, refined, purified; joined, unified, as in the welding or soldering process, in which two pieces of metal are joined together; metaphorically, tested, proven, true; a term used by the thirteenth-century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia for a form of meditation based on transposing and recombining the letters of biblical names of God as a technique of meditation; hence, combinations, permutations.

When Abulafia advocates the path of *zeruf*, he is referring to various practices designed to foster mental concentration, in which words, names of God or angels or important biblical passages are deconstructed into their individual letters and words. These are then transposed, recombined or otherwise manipulated to create multitudinous gibberish or nonsense syllables, which are continuously repeated either internally or audibly, until the mind becomes detached and emptied of all other thoughts, and becomes internally absorbed.

Abulafia or maybe one of his followers laid out the methods in the *Sefer ha-Zeruf* ('Book of Permutations'), written in 1280. The *Sefer ha-Zeruf* is primarily concerned with permutations of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It focuses on the manipulation of letters, grafting parts of words onto each other, calculations using the numerical values assigned to the letters, finding equivalences, and other manipulations of a similar nature. A practitioner begins by writing out the permuted 'names' many times. Once a certain degree of concentration has been achieved by writing, he progresses to focusing his attention by oral and mental repetition of the permutations. Eventually, through mental visualization, he experiences the letters as being even larger than himself. The notion of *zeruf* as a means of purification also draws on its literal meaning of 'smelted' or 'refined', since the mind is to some extent purified of human negativity by such concentration. Abulafia, who must have spent long hours on the practice, writes:

The letters are without question the root of all wisdom and knowledge, and they themselves are the substance of prophecy. In a prophetic vision, they appear as if they were solid bodies, actually speaking to the individual. They appear like pure living angels, . . . and sometimes the individual sees them as mountains.

Abraham Abulafia, Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba, HOBA fol.20b, in MKAK p.194

Abulafia also describes the process of working with the many possible permutations of letters as being like the generation of different melodies and variations of sound when musical instruments play together. Many "new melodies" emerge, he says, which bring joy to the heart of the meditator. It is unclear, however, whether or not he is speaking metaphorically; that is, whether he is describing new letter combinations as being like "new melodies" or whether he is hearing actual inner melodies:

I will now explain to you how the method of *zeruf* (letter combination) proceeds. You must realize that letter combination (*zeruf*) acts in a manner similar to listening with the ears. The ear hears sounds and the sounds merge, according to the form of the melody or the pronunciation. I will offer you an illustration. A violin and a harp join in playing and the ear hears, with sensations of love, variations in their harmonious playing. The strings touched with the right hand

or the left hand vibrate, and the experience is sweet to the ears; and from the ears, the sound travels to the heart and from the heart to the spleen (regarded as the seat of emotion). The joy (*simḥa*) is renewed through the pleasure of the changing melodies, and it is impossible to renew it except through the process of combinations of sounds.

The combination of letters (*zeruf*) proceeds similarly. One touches the first string, that is, analogically, the first letter, and the right hand passes to the others, to second, third, fourth or fifth strings, and from the fifth it proceeds to the others. In this process of permutations (*zeruf*), new melodies emerge and vibrate to the ears, and then touch the heart. This is how the technique of letter combination (*zeruf*) operates. . . . And the secrets which are disclosed in the vibrations rejoice the heart, for the heart then knows its God and experiences additional delight. This is alluded to in the verse: “The *Torah* of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.”¹ When it is perfect, it restores the soul.

Abraham Abulafia, Ḥayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba, HOBA p.208, in JMT pp.104–5

Abulafia’s *zeruf* was divided into two principal ‘gates’: the gate of heaven and the inner gate (the saints’ gate). Each gate was further subdivided into paths, and the paths into parts. The gates represent meditative states; and the letters of the alphabet, which were believed to have been ‘imprinted’ on each individual at the time of creation, represent human tendencies. The purpose of concentration on the letter permutations was to redirect the individual’s tendencies in a spiritual direction so that he could rise to higher levels of consciousness. There were a number of progressive stages to this meditation process, which became increasingly complex and sacred the higher the practitioner rose towards understanding and experience of God.

Abulafia believed that his method was that used and taught by the biblical prophets to attain mystical experience, beginning with the patriarch Abraham. He also attributed this practice to the *Merkavah* mystics of the rabbinic and Geonic periods (c.C1st–10th CE). He based this belief on an interpretation of a biblical passage in which Abraham is said to have “called upon the name of God”.² While some commentators understood ‘calling’ to mean praying to God with external prayers, Abulafia and other kabbalists believed it to mean pronouncing and/or manipulating the letters of God’s name.³ This understanding was based on their interpretation of an early pre-kabbalistic work, the *Sefer Yeẓirah* (‘Book of Formation’). The *Sefer Yeẓirah* presents the creation as God’s expression of the unspoken Word of God, which He accomplished by means of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the numbers assigned to them:

Twenty-two foundation letters:

He engraved (*ḥakak*) them, He carved (*ḥazav*) them,

He permuted (*ẓaraf*) them, He weighed (*shakal*) them,
 He transformed them;
 And with them, He depicted all that was formed
 and all that would be formed.

Sefer Yeẓirah 2:2, SYAK p.100

And when Abraham our father, may he rest in peace,
 looked (*heibit*), saw (*ra'ah*), understood (*hevin*),
 probed (*ḥakar*), engraved (*ḥakak*), and carved (*ḥaẓav*) –
 He was successful in (*i.e.* participated in) creation, as is written,
 “And the souls that they made in Haran.”⁴
 Immediately there was revealed to him the Master of all.

Sefer Yeẓirah 6:7, SYAK p.255

Abulafia and even earlier kabbalists believed that this passage pointed to Abraham’s practice of the permutation and manipulation of the letters of God’s name, interpreting “engraved (*ḥakak*)” as writing the letters, “carved (*ḥaẓav*)” as forming the letters, and “permuted (*ẓaraf*)” as manipulating and combining them.⁵

The manipulation and permutation of the letters was seen as a way of making oneself receptive to God’s creative and sustaining power. According to the Bible, God brought about the creation through His divine Speech – His sayings or utterances – as in, “And God said, ‘Let there be light. . . .’”⁶ Most kabbalists believe that the Hebrew letters of God’s names, as given in the Bible, were the building blocks by which God projected the divine power into the creation. Therefore, by concentrating on these letters and trying to join one’s consciousness to them, it would become possible to gain control over the spiritual forces that brought the creation into being, and experience the spiritual reality.

There is a legend preserved in the *Talmud* concerning a passage in *Exodus* about a craftsman known as Bezalel, whose job it was to erect the tabernacle in the desert so that the Israelites could worship *Yahweh* during their forty years of travel. It is said that, because Bezalel was “filled with the spirit of God (*ruah Elohim*), with wisdom (*hokhmah*) and understanding (*tevinah*)”,⁷ he knew how to permute (*le-ẓaref*) the letters by which heaven and earth had been created. This implies that the creation took place through God’s permuting and combining of the letters. The belief was the basis for the development of the techniques of *ẓeruf*, as a way of imitating God’s creative process, and by so doing to rise to a higher state of spiritual consciousness.

Abulafia also found a hint of his techniques in a verse from the *Psalms*:

As for God, His way is perfect (*tamim*),
 the word of the Lord is proven (*ẓerufah*).

Psalms 18:31, KB

Instead of interpreting the word *zerufah* as ‘tested’ or ‘proven’, Abulafia interpreted it to mean ‘permuted’. Since the word *tamim* implies a level of purity and wholeness, of spiritual experience, he interpreted this passage to mean that through the techniques of *zeruf*, one can reach a state of enlightenment and purity.⁸

An interesting example of *zeruf* is proposed by Rabbi Moses Cordovero, according to an account given by his disciple the Italian kabbalist Rabbi Mordekhai Dato (c.1525–1585):

The occupation of our ancestors, shepherding sheep (*ro’ei zon*), contains a secret meaning. It actually refers to the vocation of *zeruf otiyot nekudot*, the combination of letters and vowel points. For the sage versed in the true wisdom cares for the self by means of the secret of the combination of the holy letters and vowel points, for they are exceedingly great. . . .

Know that the man Moses Cordovero took for himself the vocation of letter and vowel combination. He practised it successfully and successfully trained others in this art.

Mordekhai Dato, Iggeret ha-Levanon, in HKUT pp.155–56, in SEKI p.137

This summary of Cordovero’s perspective is based on Abulafia’s *Ḥayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba*, in which he maintains:

These three principles – *otiyot* (letters), *zeruf* (combination), and *nekudot* (vowel points) – form *o-z-n*, whose letters may be rearranged to form the word *zon* (sheep), which is used as an acronym for the above. . . . Thus, a person when he attains perfection becomes a shepherd.

Abraham Abulafia, Ḥayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba, HOBA fol.45b, in SEKI p.137

See also: **hazkarat shemot, yiḥudim.**

1. *Psalms* 19:8.
2. *Genesis* 12:8.
3. Abraham Abulafia, *Maḥfē ‘aḥ ha-Shemot*, MSAA fol.58b, in MBAK p.75.
4. *Genesis* 12:5.
5. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, MKAK pp.76–77.
6. *Genesis* 1:3ff.
7. *Exodus* 31:3; *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot* 55a.
8. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, MKAK p.77.

zhāixīn (C) *Lit.* fasting (*zhāi*) of the mind (*xīn*). See **xīnzhāi**.

zhì (C) *Lit.* to treat a disease. See **liáo**.

zhǐguān (C), **shikan** (J) *Lit.* stop (*zhǐ*) + observe (*guān*); calmness (*zhǐ*) and contemplation (*guān*); cessation, calming, quieting, tranquillity (*zhǐ*) + contemplation, insight (*guān*); equivalent to the Pali *samatha-vipassanā* (S. *shamatha-vipashyanā*).

In general, *zhǐguān* is a twofold meditation practice that consists of instilling peace and tranquillity (*zhǐ*) in the mind, eliminating its agitations, impurities and delusions to a point of quiescence by focusing on a single meditation subject or object. Following this, having brought a degree of tranquillity to the mind, the meditator practises forms of meditation intended to cultivate perception or insight (*guān*) into the true nature of the mind.

In the teachings of the Chinese master Zhìyǐ (538–597), founder of the *Tiāntái* school of Buddhism, *zhǐ* implies stilling the mind by emptying it of impurities and scattered thoughts; bringing the mind into focus upon the present moment; and realizing the essential oneness of the mind, whether scattered or concentrated. *Guān* entails stilling the waves of the mind by cultivating the wisdom to perceive their illusory nature and acquire an understanding of the many aspects of existence; acquiring insight into the Suchness (S. *Tathatā*) that is the essential nature of all things; and recognition of the essential oneness of the contemplative and non-contemplative states.

Zhìyǐ's writings include the *Móhē zhǐguān* ('Longer Tranquillity and Contemplation') and the *Xiǎo zhǐguān* ('Shorter Tranquillity and Contemplation'). The former is a comprehensive compendium of the many different forms of Buddhist meditation that were prevalent in his day, including: mindfulness techniques for use in everyday life; the recognition of absolute Reality in the transient phenomena of material existence; and ways of invoking the name of Amitābha Buddha and visualizing his form. Zhìyǐ was syncretic in outlook, seeking to avoid the limitations of the one-sided approach of other schools, and many of the techniques he describes were standard *Chán* and Pure Land practices of the time. In fact, many leaders of the Pure Land community were *Tiāntái* monks; and in later years, Zhìyǐ's works provided inspiration and instruction for Buddhists outside his own *Tiāntái* tradition.

Tiāntái itself, as taught by Zhìyǐ, attempted to embrace all schools of Buddhism. It accepted that all sentient beings share the same universal *buddha*-nature, that liberation is the same for all, and that all can make use of the same means of attaining enlightenment. Introduced to Japan in the ninth century, where it is known as the *Tendai* school, it remains among the forefront of Buddhist schools. Since the term *zhǐguān* covers all meditation techniques, it is used very much as an umbrella term for all varieties of Buddhist meditation.

The *Xiǎo zhǐguān*, also called the *Tóng méng zhǐguān* ('Tranquillity and Contemplation for Beginners'), consists of a beginners' guide to *zhǐguān*. Critical of the one-sidedness of the *Chán* schools of his time, Zhìyǐ

introduced *zhǐguān* as an all-inclusive meditational practice. As he says in his introduction:

There are many ways to enter the true reality of *nirvāṇa*, but none that is more essential or that goes beyond the twofold method of tranquillity and contemplation (*zhǐguān*). The reason is that tranquillity (*zhǐ*) is the preliminary gate for overcoming the bonds (of passionate afflictions); contemplation (*guān*) is the proper requisite for severing delusions. Tranquillity (*zhǐ*) provides good nourishment for nurturing the mind; contemplation (*guān*) is the sublime technique for arousing spiritual understanding. Tranquillity (*zhǐ*) is the pre-eminent basis for (attaining) concentrated meditation (*chán*, S. *dhyaṇa*); contemplation (*guān*) is the basis (for the accumulation) of wisdom (*zhì huì*). If one perfects the twofold aspects of concentration (*dīng*, S. *saṃādhi*) and wisdom (*huì*), then one is fully endowed with the aspects of both benefiting oneself and benefiting others.

Zhìyǐ, *Xiǎo zhǐguān*, T46 1915:462b5–11; cf. in CCKS p.4

In his *Xiǎo zhǐguān*, Zhìyǐ considers *zhǐguān* under two headings: preparatory practices and main practices. The preparatory exercises include the reduction of desires; the overcoming of hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*); the regulation of eating and sleeping; control of the body, the breathing, and the mind; and the observance of a code of good conduct (*shīla*). Control of the body includes learning to sit still and to remain in one posture. Control of the breathing implies awareness of steady breathing, counting the breaths, and so on. All these are deemed helpful towards the goal of controlling the mind.

Three main practices are advised: focusing the attention on the tip of the nose or the navel, *etc.*; controlling the mind by stopping thoughts as they arise; and cultivating awareness of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and emptiness (*shūnyatā*). Dependent origination or dependent arising is the observation that one thing is always dependent for its existence upon another, that nothing exists independently of other things. The apprehension of emptiness is the awareness of the essential emptiness or lack of reality that dwells within all things.

The practice of *guān* includes standard Buddhist contemplations or reflections (*bhāvanā*) – in particular, contemplation on foulness (S. *ashubha bhāvanā*); contemplation on lovingkindness (S. *maitrī bhāvanā*); contemplation on the limitations of the six realms of existence in *samsāra*, *viz.* the realms of gods, demigods, human beings, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell beings; and contemplation on the essential emptiness of all *dharmas* (teachings), though they may be useful in a short-term context by preventing the arising of further delusions. Such reflections can be carried on during normal activities or in a more focused manner at times set aside for meditation. *Zhǐguān* also includes concentration on breathing and meditation techniques common to tantric or esoteric Buddhism, notably the use of *mantras*, *mudrās*, and *maṇḍalas*.

See also: **bhāvanā**, **samatha**, **vipassanā**.

zhìxīn, chíxīn (C) *Lit.* to control, to govern, or to rule (*zhì*) the mind (*xīn*); to hold, to manage, or to control (*chí*) the mind (*xīn*).

A Daoist meditator works to withdraw the mind from exterior demands, pleasures and influences in order to bring his attention to rest in the centre of his being. Instead of remaining scattered through the senses, the mind is brought inside so that it can slowly rise up and go deep within. Since the mind is fickle, collecting one's attention at this central point requires constant vigilance, and the mind has to be guarded from wandering out. This control or governance of the mind brings about the peace and stillness in which the presence of the *Dào* can be felt. With the eventual demise of the mind's outgoing tendencies, awareness of the *Dào* becomes constant, and the practitioner meets all circumstances with equanimity.

The author of the *Book of Master Wén* (c.200 BCE), speaking in the voice of Lǎozǐ, recalls how practitioners since ancient times have governed their minds, and he advises those of his own time to do the same. The benefits gained by controlling one's own mind, he says, cannot be bestowed upon us by others. In this context, "desire (*yù*)" may be presumed to include lust:

Since ancient times, those who practise *Dào* control their passions and temperaments by restraining the functioning of their minds (*zhìxīnshù*). They cultivate (develop their spiritual life) while blending in; they stand firm while remaining flexible. They allow nothing that has no benefit to their original nature (*xìng*) to burden their virtue (*dé*). They allow nothing that has no advantage to (spiritual) life (*shēng*) to disrupt their harmony. . . .

Return to your inherent spiritual life (*yuán tiānmìng*), then you will not be deluded by disaster or good fortune. Restrain the contrivances of the mind (*zhìxīnshù*), then you will not indulge in pleasure and anger. Control your likes and dislikes, then you will not covet useless things. Moderate your temperament and passions, then you will not be spoiled by desire (*yù*).

Not being misled by disaster or happiness is adapting to activity (*dòng*) and inactivity (*jìng*). To restrain yourself from indulgence in pleasure and anger is not giving in to reward or punishment. Not to covet useless things is not harming your (original) nature (*xìng*) with desire. To be unspoiled by desire is to be content and to cultivate life.

These four things cannot be found outside, so do not depend on others. They can only be attained by returning to your (true) self.

Wénzǐ 1, 9, DZ746

The degree to which the mind is controlled or uncontrolled depends on “attainment of *Dào*”. The *Book of Master Wén* says that when the mind is controlled, a person’s temperament is peaceful and sweet, and his behaviour is courteous, respectful, and flexible. Conversely, if the mind is uncontrolled, then confusion and contention ensue:

Both agreeable and disagreeable temperaments in people come from the mind. With mind controlled (*zhì*), the temperament is agreeable. With mind confused (*luàn*), the temperament is disagreeable.

Whether the mind is controlled (*zhì*) or confused (*luàn*) depends on attainment of *Dào*. With attainment of *Dào*, the mind is calm (*zhì*). Without attainment of *Dào*, the mind is confused (*luàn*).

With mind controlled (*zhì*), interaction with others is harmonious. With mind confused (*luàn*), interaction with others is contentious.

Wénzǐ 3, DZ746

An uncontrolled mind is impure and agitated, and leads to wrong action; a controlled mind is pure and tranquil, and leads to right action. An impure and confused mind creates obstacles in life; a pure and clear mind automatically avoids creating obstacles. Control of the mind leads to eternal repose in the *Dào*.

This is why the anonymous author of the *Scripture on the Three Pure Subtle Natures* (C18th) – attributing his collection of sayings to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) – speaks of the need to govern the mind (*zhìxīn*):

To practise refinement, it is surely necessary to remove passions. It is particularly important to control the mind (*zhìxīn*). . . . What does it mean ‘to control the mind (*zhìxīn*)’? The mind is originally pure and still, open and unoccupied; this is the essential character of the mind. To control this mind (*zhì cǐ xīn*) is to let it return to its original state, clear as flowing water, pure without defilement, still as a valley, empty without disturbance, vast as heaven and earth, immeasurable in its reach, open as an immense desert, unfathomably boundless. Such is a mind that is empty of every single thing.

It is like charcoal that glows, like still water that reflects, like a clean mirror that retains no passing images, like the wisdom (*pútí*, S. *bodhi*) that is the root of the *Dào*. Constantly polish the clean mirror, then wisdom (*pútí*) will be continually augmented. Keep the mirror clean and remain inwardly detached, then wisdom (*pútí*) will be impressed upon the mind. When you remain inwardly detached, then (the impressions of) all things will disappear. When the mind becomes like this, then (awareness of) the universal *Dào* will grow.

Qīngwēi sānpīn zhēnjīng, ZW225

The author therefore expands on the need to quell the mind. Of all the things that cause the mind to become unruly, the main culprit is the group of “seven passions (*qīqíng*)”. The “six bandits”, a Buddhist metaphor, are the five senses plus the aspect of the mind that functions as perception:

To know the *Dào*, you must first remove the leader of the (gang of) bandits. Who is this bandit chieftain? It is the seven passions (*qīqíng*). It is essential that you root them out in order to recover the clarity, stillness, and the innate embodiment (*běntǐ*) of the vast emptiness (*xūkàng*). By this means, the six bandits (*liùzéi*) get no chance of a look in. What does this involve? It requires controlling the mind (*zhìxīn*).

Remove the seven passions to control and purify the mind (so that you can) cultivate the great elixir. The practice of incorrect methods not only obscures the *Dào*, but also conceals one’s true nature (*xìng*). This true nature (*xìng*) is inherently endowed by heaven. Therefore, to control the mind (*zhìxīn*) is in the interest of one’s true nature (*xìng*). The mind must be controlled (*xīn zhī bì zhì*), so that its true nature (*xìng*) can be revealed.

Qīngwēi sānpǐn zhēnjīng, ZW225

Having earlier explained that anger “obstructs the *Dào*” and that desire “disrupts the *Dào*”, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) goes on to say that anger and desire have to be completely eliminated. In this context, a major component of desire (*yù*) is lust. This is why Daoist masters such as the eleventh-century Zhāng Bódūān (*aka*. Zīyáng) consider refinement of the self and mastery of the mind as the priority:

Zīyáng (Zhāng Bódūān) said: “You must first refine the self (*liànjǐ*) and control the mind (*chíxīn*) in order to practise cultivation and achieve the nine restorations (returning to the Origin by overcoming the passions).”

Self-refinement (*liànjǐ*) is actually refinement of anger (*fèn*) and desire (*yù*). Control of the mind (*chíxīn*) is maintaining discipline of the mind (*chíshǒu qí xīn*), so that anger and desire do not grow... Then it is not difficult to practise *Dào*.

Liú Yīmíng, Kǒngyì (41) chǎnzhēn, Dàxiàng zhuàn, ZW246

See also: **liànxīn**, **shōuxīn**, **xiángxīn**, **xīnzhāi**, **xiūxīn**.

zhùjī (C) *Lit.* to construct (*zhù*) a foundation (*jī*); to build a basis; in Daoism, laying the foundation as the basis for spiritual practice and, by extension, supporting the entire spiritual journey to its completion; commonly mentioned along with *liànjǐ* (self-refinement) as the foundation of spiritual life.

A disciple asked master Zhào Bìchén (1860–1942) what it means to ‘lay the foundation’. His reply is based on Daoist *nèidān* (inner alchemy) philosophy, which teaches refinement and transmutation of the “three treasures” that give life to the body – viz. vital essence (*jīng*), subtle life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*):

Before laying the foundation (*zhùjī*), the original spirit (*yuánshén*) wanders outside in quest of sense data, the original Energy (*yuánqì*) is dissipated, and the original vital essence (*yuánjīng*) is defiled. You must sublimate the three treasures (*sānbǎo*), namely vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*) and spirit (*shén*) in order to restore their original strength. The foundation (*jī*) will be laid when these three elements unite; only then can immortality be attained.

This foundation (*jī*) will lift you from the human to the transcendent level; will still your spirit (*shén*) within ten months; and will enable you to give up sleep within nine or ten months, to dispense with food and drink within ten months, to feel neither cold in winter nor hot in summer, and to achieve the unperturbed spirit (*shén*) that leads to undisturbed serenity.

If life energy (*qì*) is purified, it will settle and need neither inhalation nor exhalation for hundreds and thousands of aeons. If spirit (*shén*) is purified, it will be immaterial, free from either the dullness that causes sleepiness or the disturbance that leads to wandering.

This laying of the foundation (*jī*) will cause life to last as long as heaven and earth and will lead to the acquisition of the supernatural powers possessed by all the immortals. To lay the foundation (*jī*) of positive spirit (*yángshén*) means to prevent the positive vital essence (*yángjīng*) from draining away, thus producing the golden elixir (*jīndān*, innate spiritual awareness). All this is achieved by laying the foundation (*zhùjī*).

Zhào Bìchén, Xingmìng fǎjué míngzhǐ, ZW872; cf. TYAI pp.28–29

In the majority of human beings, vital essence (*jīng*) dissipates outward, which manifests in negative emotions, particularly anger and greed. Daoist masters such as the eighteenth-century hermit known as Yǎngzhēnzǐ (‘Master who Cultivates Reality’) explain that this is why earnest practitioners pay great attention to preserving *jīng* – of which sexual energy is a part – and refining it into *qì*:

True human beings (*zhēnrén*) refine vital essence (*jīng*) into life energy (*qì*). In ordinary people, life energy (*qì*) flows into vital essence (*jīng*). The ancient sages likened this tendency of scattering and dissipating to mercury (*gǒng*), and resistance (to this scattering) to control by the dragon (*lóng*, i.e. positivity, spirit). Those practising *Dào* preserve it (*jīng*) firmly and do not lose it. This is called laying the foundation (*zhùjī*).

Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821), who summarized the path of inner alchemy in a list of ‘twenty-four secrets’, places laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) as the second secret:

Refine the self (*liànjǐ*) and lay the foundation (*zhùjī*);
 Control anger and subdue lust;
 Restrain the self and return to propriety (*kèjǐfūlǐ*).
 Laying the foundation (*zhùjī*) is to refine the self (*liànjǐ*)
 and control the mind (*chíxīn*),
 to abandon and detach yourself
 from all worldly passions and delusional thoughts.
 When refinement (*liàn*) results in the state
 of no-self (*jǐ wúchù*, self nowhere) – untouchable and unshakable –
 how can anything confuse you?

Liú Yīmíng, Dānfǎ èrshísì jué 2, in Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

In another text, master Liú advises students to “control and discipline their anger (*fèn*)” and to “stifle and subdue desire (*yù*)”, so that they can develop a “calm and peaceful” temperament. In this context, it may be presumed that desire (*yù*) includes lust:

Virtuous people (*jūnzǐ*) control and discipline their anger (*fèn*) and do their utmost to change their attitude, so that their temperament is calm and peaceful. They do not stop until it is firm and still – unmovable and unshakable like a mountain. They stifle and subdue desire (*yù*), and do their utmost to eliminate delusional thoughts, so that their mind dies and their spirit lives. They do not stop until it is clear and pure – without ripples or waves, like a lake.

Anger is something that obstructs the *Dào*; desire is a robber that disrupts the *Dào*. If the slightest trace of anger or desire remains – even expectation of the great *Dào* – attainment cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, the first exercise in cultivating the *Dào* is to control anger and subdue desire. Once anger and desire have been reduced and eliminated, your exercises thereafter will no longer be obstructed or hindered, and there will be hope for the way forward.

Therefore, Confucians believe it essential to restrain the self and recover propriety; Buddhists consider it fundamental to return the myriad things to emptiness; Daoists maintain that the foremost thing is to refine the self (*liànjǐ*) and lay the foundation (*zhùjī*). All the saints of the three disciplines teach people, in essence, to begin by eliminating anger and desire.

Liú Yīmíng, Kǒngyì (41) chǎnzhen, Dàxiàng zhuàn, ZW246

In his *Xiūzhēn hòubiàn* ('Further Discriminations in Cultivating Reality'), master Liú Yīmíng considers *zhùjī* (laying the foundation) and *liànjǐ* (refining the self) to be effectively the same thing.

See also: **liànjǐ**.

zikhr (He) *Lit.* remembrance, repetition; possibly a reference to the practice of repeating God's name or to fostering an awareness of His presence.

In *Hosea*, *Isaiah* and the *Psalms*, for instance, continuous remembrance of God is the devotee's heartfelt desire:

But the Lord is the God of hosts:
the Lord is his (the devotee's) remembrance (*zikhr*).
Turn again, then, to your God,
hold fast to love and justice,
and always put your hope in your God.

Hosea 12:6–7; cf. KB

Indeed, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord,
have we waited for You;
The desire of our soul is for Your name,
and to the remembrance (*zikhr*) of You.
With my soul have I desired You in the night:
with my spirit (*nefesh*) within me I seek You:

Isaiah 26:8–9; cf. KB

Sing to the Lord, O His pious ones,
and give thanks to the remembrance (*zikhr*) of His holiness.

Psalms 30:4

And You, O Lord, are enthroned eternally,
Your remembrance (*zikhr*) for all generations.

Psalms 102:12

Surely he (the good person) will never be moved.
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance (*zikhr*).

Psalms 112:6

To possess the concentration and control of mind that enables one to focus continually on just one thing, even something of this world, is rare. To be able to maintain a continuous remembrance or awareness of God is even rarer and requires considerable practice. It may be justifiably concluded, therefore,

that these biblical passages are not mere religious eulogy and hyperbole, but refer to the practice of spiritual meditation.

See also: **dhikr**, **siyah**.

zuhd (A/P) *Lit.* asceticism, abstinence, renunciation, austerity, self-denial, detachment, piety; renunciation even of permitted pleasures; renunciation of the world and voluntary submission to physical hardship in the attempt to free the mind from attachment to the body and the things of the senses. As renunciation and asceticism, *zuhd* is variously understood by different Sufi writers as either external, internal, or both.

It is generally understood that the earliest Sufis pursued a path of asceticism. Sufism, as it is now known, developed only later. Nevertheless, the attractions of self-mortification continued to exercise a hold on Sufi minds, and there is considerable discussion of the subject in Sufi literature. Ibn al-ʿĀrif, for example, describes the nature of asceticism, but points out that to “make an issue of the world” while simultaneously trying to escape from its grip is to give energy and attention to the obstacle, rather than the goal. “True asceticism”, he goes on, is “to be preoccupied uniquely” with God:

Asceticism (*zuhd*) ... consists in making the desireful nature abstain from pleasures, in renouncing the temptation to return again to that from which one is separated, in dropping the search for what one has lost, in depriving oneself of superfluous desires, in thwarting the goad of the passions, in neglecting all that does not concern the soul.

But this is an imperfection as regards the path of the elect, for it presupposes an importance attached to the things of the world, an abstention from their use, an outward mortification in depriving oneself of things here, while inwardly an attachment is felt for them.

To make an issue of the world amounts to turning yourself towards your self: it is to pass your time struggling with your self; it is to take account of your feelings and to remain with your self against your desireful nature...

True asceticism (*zuhd*) is the ardent aspiration of the heart towards Him alone; it is to place, in Him alone, the aspirations and desires of the soul; to be preoccupied uniquely with Him, without any preoccupation, in order that He (to Whom be praise!) may remove from you the mass of these causes.

Ibn al-ʿĀrif, Maḥāsīn al-Majālis; cf. MMAS, in CEI p.436

Ibn al-ʿArabī regards renunciation as a possible stepping stone during the initial stages of the Sufi Way. But since God is in every part of His creation,

permeating all existent things, for a soul who is apart from Him to renounce His creation would be to renounce the only available avenue of knowing Him. The reality is that while living among and being a part of created things, it is not possible to renounce created things. The idea only has an emotional and conceptual attraction, but it can never be actualized. Hence, rather than rejecting created things, the seeker of God should learn to see and love the Divine that dwells in everything. Love of God is a higher path than rejecting His creation:

Renunciation (*zuhd*) of things can occur only through the ignorance and lack of knowledge of the one who renounces, and through the veil which covers his eyes, that is, the lack of unveiling and witnessing. . . . If he only knew or witnessed the fact that the whole cosmos speaks by glorifying and lauding its Creator and that it witnesses Him, how could he renounce it, as long as it has this attribute?

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 3:263.16, FMIA5 (4:358) p.389, SPK p.157

Sufi systematizers have commonly categorized *zuhd* as one of the states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) of spiritual evolution. These include faith (*īmān*), repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), hope (*rajāʾ*), fear of God (*khawf*), poverty (*faqr*), conversion (*inābah*), self-restraint (*waraʾ*), asceticism or renunciation (*zuhd*), unification (*tawḥīd*) of the personal will with the Divine, reliance (*tawakkul*) on God, acquiescence (*riḍāʾ*) in His will, intimacy (*uns*) with Him, love (*maḥabbah*), which includes longing for God (*shawq*), and so on. Some Sufis listed more such states and stations, others simplified the matter by discussing less.

Sufis have also explained the meaning of *zuhd*. Al-Qushayrī defines *zuhd* as relinquishing all that distracts the soul from God, freeing the hand from wealth and the heart from desire. He quotes the early ascetic, Ḥasan of Baṣrah, as saying that “*zuhd* in this world is to hate its people and all that is in it, and to leave what is in this world to those who dwell in it”.¹

Al-Sarrāj considers *zuhd* to be the basis upon which the edifice of spiritual growth is built:

Renunciation (*zuhd*) is a noble station. It is the foundation of all spiritual progress. It is the first step on the Way for those in search of God Most High, those who seek to devote themselves to His service alone, to carry out His will, and to trust completely to Him. He who does not base his practice on renunciation cannot hope to make progress beyond it, because love of this world is the beginning of all sin, and the renunciation of the world is the beginning of all good deeds and all obedience to His will.

Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Lumaʾ fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA p.46;

cf. in EIM p.202, in RMI pp.41–42

Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād sees the essence of *zuhd* as surrender to the divine will:

The essence of renunciation (*zuhd*) is to be content with God, whatever He does.

Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' 1; cf. TAN1 p.83

Ni'mat Allāh Valī understands it as a progression from the external to the internal:

In the early stages, renunciation (*zuhd*) is giving up (*tark*) distractions, severance of attachments, and removal of impediments. In the final stages, it is negating the vestiges of self by obliterating the habit of dualism.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.172; cf. in SSE3 p.147

Jurjānī interprets it in a similar manner:

Renunciation (*zuhd*) in its literal sense is giving up (*tark*) the desire for things, while in the terminology of the people of divine Reality, it means loathing the world and turning away from it.

It has been said that renunciation (*zuhd*) is the forswearing of ease in the world by seeking it in the hereafter. It has also been said that renunciation (*zuhd*) is the emptying of the heart of desire for whatever one does not possess.

Jurjānī, Ta'rīfāt, KTJ p.108; cf. in SSE3 p.147

Sufyān Thawrī says that *zuhd* is essentially internal, not external:

Renunciation (*zuhd*) in the world is not a matter of wearing sackcloth or eating barley bread. It is the curtailing of one's expectations and not attaching one's heart to the world.

Sufyān Thawrī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' 1, TAN1 p.192

Tahānawī comments that the outward practice of *zuhd* can become dry and devoid of love when inner spiritual experiences do not come as expected:

Dry renunciation (*zuhd-i khushk*) may be defined as occurring when the outer form of one's renunciation (*zuhd*) does not lead to inner states. It may also refer to a renunciation (*zuhd*) devoid of love and lovingkindness.

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.443; cf. in SSE3 p.148

Al-Ghazālī observes that the renunciate realizes that what he has renounced is nothing compared to the divine treasures he has received:

The knowledge that results from renunciation (*zuhd*) consists of the realization that what is renounced is of little value compared to what is received. It is like the knowledge of the merchant who knows that what he receives in exchange for his merchandise is worth more than what he is selling, and so he desires the sale. Whoever does not have this knowledge cannot bring himself to part from his merchandise.

So he who understands that what belongs to God is abiding, and that the joys of the other life are better and more lasting than the pleasures of this life, as jewels are better and more durable than snow, desires to exchange this life for that other. No one who possesses snow would find any hardship in exchanging it for jewels and pearls. For this world is like snow exposed to the sun, which continues to melt until it disappears altogether; but the next life is like a precious stone which never passes away.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 4; cf. in RMI pp.63–64

Zuhd is sometimes compared to other states and stations on the Sufi Way. *Faqr* (poverty), for example, is understood in both a spiritual and material sense. Tahānawī points out that a person may be poor, yet still be attached to “material things”. On the other hand, living among worldly possessions does not necessarily mean attachment to them:

Poverty (*faqr*) is distinguished from asceticism (*zuhd*) in that the former is possible without the existence of the latter, since one may renounce the world with firm resolve yet still retain a craving for it. By the same token, renunciation (*zuhd*) is possible without poverty (*faqr*), in the sense that one may be involved with material things yet not desire them.

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT3 p.53; cf. in SSE5 pp.134–35

Conversely, contented resignation (*riḍā'*) to the divine will is regarded as higher than renunciation, because the renunciate is still seeking a higher stage, while he who is truly resigned is content:

Bishr Ḥāfī asked Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ whether renunciation (*zuhd*) or contented resignation (*riḍā*) was better. Fuḍayl replied: “Contented resignation (*riḍā*), because he who is contented does not desire a higher stage.” *I.e.* there is a stage above renunciation (*zuhd*) that the renouncer desires, but there is no stage above contentment (*riḍā*) that the resigned man should wish for it. Hence, the shrine is superior to the gate.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XIV:1, KMM p.222; cf. KM p.179

The Sufi poets and addicts of divine love have characteristically observed that the dry self-consciousness of renunciation is greatly inferior to the vibrant and life-giving fire of the “wine” of divine love. As Ḥāfīz says:

The sternness of asceticism (*zuhd*) does not suit
 those languid from wine;
 I am a disciple of that cheerful troop of wine bibbers.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.186, DIH p.312; cf. DHWC (408:2) p.692, in SSE3 p.146

ʿIrāqī says that by love, he has been freed from “monastery and renunciation (*zuhd*)” to travel the path to the inner sanctum (“the tavern of ruin”):

With your love, we have travelled
 the path of the tavern of ruin (*kharābāt*);
 From monastery and renunciation (*zuhd*),
 we have once again been freed!

ʿIrāqī, Kullīyāt 2623, KHI p.205; cf. in SSE3 p.146

Saʿdī calls for the beloved as the bearer of “wine” and the minstrel who brings the divine Music:

O cupbearer! Give me that ruby wine!
 O musician! Play me that air on the harp!
 For I have never achieved anything from asceticism (*zuhd*),
 so how long shall I strike my glass against a stone?
 My heart has been broken without attaining its Object;
 Alas that my reputation and honour have been sacrificed in vain.

Saʿdī, Ṭayyibāt 235:1–3, KSSS p.297; cf. TOS pp.319–20

See also: **tark** (►4).

1. Al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, *RAQQ* p.74, *RQQQ* p.61, in *RM* p.77.

zuò (C) *Lit.* to sit; in Daoist texts, to meditate. See **dǎzuò**.

zuòchán (C), **zazen** (J) *Lit.* to sit (*zuò*) and meditate (*chán*); in Daoism, to sit in meditation, to sit in absorption; in *Chán* Buddhism, seated meditation. See **meditation (Daoism)**, **zazen**.

zuòwàng (C) *Lit.* sitting (*zuò*) and forgetting (*wàng*); sitting in forgetfulness, sitting in oblivion; the practice of being mentally at rest, not dwelling on any thought; establishing a state of consciousness in which one becomes oblivious of all distinctions between self and other, life and death, and all other dualities; a Daoist form of quietistic meditation, first mentioned

in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE). In this state, the practitioner becomes one with all things, in preparation for becoming one with the *Dào* as the source of all.

According to an anecdote related in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, the disciple Yán Huí informs his master Confucius (Kǒngfūzǐ) that he is “making progress”. Confucius asks Yán Huí to explain what he means. Yán Huí replies, “I sit and forget everything (*zuòwàng*).” Confucius is curious and asks Yán Huí to explain what he means. Yán Huí replies:

My connection with the body and its parts is dissolved (*lit.* I smash up my limbs and body); my organs of perception are discarded. Thus, leaving my material form and bidding farewell to my knowledge, I have become one with the Great Pervader (*dàtōng*, i.e. the *Dào*). This I call sitting and forgetting (*zuòwàng*) all things.

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. *TT1* p.257

Confucius is so impressed with Yán Huí’s progress that he says:

One (with that Pervader), you are free from all likings; so transformed, you have become impermanent! You have, indeed, become superior to me! I must ask leave to follow in your footsteps.

Zhuāngzǐ 6; cf. *TT1* p.257

The first interpreter of and commentator on the *Zhuāngzǐ*, the philosopher Guō Xiàng (C3rd CE), says of this passage:

In the state of sitting in oblivion (*zuòwàng*), what can remain that is not forgotten? First, one forgets all outer phenomena; then, one also forgets that which causes the phenomena. Internally, one is unaware of the body (*shēn*); externally, one is unaware of heaven and earth. Thus, one becomes utterly empty and can be at one with all that changes, leaving nothing unpervaded.

Guō Xiàng, *Nánhuá zhēnjīng zhùshū*, DZ745 8:39b; cf. *ET2* p.1308

The Chinese character *wàng* (forgetting) combines two characters: *xīn* (mind), which is usually associated with mental and emotional reactions to the things of the world; and *wáng* (lose, perish, be gone). Hence, the *zuòwàng* practitioner does not meditate on any ‘thing’, but rather empties his mind of all thoughts and desires. He lets go of all reactive patterns in order to reach a state of deep meditative absorption, coming to rest in a mystical centredness that leads to realization of the *Dào*. The goal is to go beyond not only duality, but all limitations. Ultimately, a true and permanent state of desirelessness is attained, which is union with the *Dào*.

The unknown author of the *Scripture on the Three Pure Subtle Natures* (C18th) – attributing his collection of sayings to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) – describes the condition of a person who practises *zuòwàng*, and the results that can be expected:

I know without knowing; I see without seeing. I have no ears, no eyes, no intentions, no thoughts, and no cognitions. Being nothing in this way, a state is reached in which even nothingness is absent; then nothing can move the mind. Being imperturbable is called ‘sitting in forgetfulness (*zuòwàng*)’.

Only if you forget (*wàng*) can you receive the *Dào*. You then pass through the gate (*guān*), tame your passions, lay the foundation, and merge with the primordial spirit (*gǒng*, lit. mercury). If in forgetting (*wàng*) things, you only battle with things but do not pacify things, hoping thereby to learn the secret method of *Dào*, this is not only of no benefit, it is also harmful.

Qīngwēi sānpǐn zhēnjīng, ZW225

To “pass through the gate (*guān*)” indicates ‘entry’ through the *xuánguān* (mysterious gate or pass), which is the transition between the physical and the spiritual.

Master Gǔyángzǐ (C20th) indicates that this gateway to the *Dào* is found in quiet forgetfulness:

Sitting in meditation (*jìngzuò*) you will reach a point where there is no individual and no self (*wúwǒ*), and the body (*xíng*) will be forgotten (*wàng*), as if it had perished. Then you will not be far from the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*).

Gǔyángzǐ, in *Fǎngdào yǔlù*, FYL

Master Wéi Jié (C6th) suggests that by permanently forgetting one’s self one can restore one’s original nature, the state enjoyed before it was diminished by human existence:

Originally, I had no self (*shēn*),
yet suddenly there it was.
Always remain forgetful of this self (*shēn*),
then you will be like you were before birth.

Wéi Jié, *Xīshēng jīng jízhù*, DZ726 12:15; cf. in *TMPS* p.163

See also: **meditation (Daoism)**.